2017

Manifestations of Corporal Oppression – Embodiments of Culturalpolitical Resistance: The Representation of the Body in German Literature of the Long Nineteenth Century

Hans Niehues
University of South Carolina

MANIFESTATIONS OF CORPORAL OPPRESSION – EMBODIMENTS OF CULTURAL-POLITICAL RESISTANCE: THE REPRESENTATION OF THE BODY IN GERMAN LITERATURE OF THE LONG NINETEENTH CENTURY

by

Hans Niehues

Bachelor of Arts
Ruhr-University Bochum, 2012

Master of Education
Ruhr-University Bochum, 2015

Master of Arts
Ruhr-University Bochum, 2015

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Master of Arts in

German

College of Arts and Sciences

University of South Carolina

2017

Accepted by:

Michael Kirkwood House, Director of Thesis

Agnes Mueller, Reader

Cheryl L. Addy, Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

ABSTRACT

The "long nineteenth century" was subject to various social, economic, political and cultural changes that were propelled by the Enlightenment and industrialization. This alteration of human life also had a physical dimension. It generated new bodypolitics and conceptions of labor which had a significant impact on the human body. This project is concerned with the changing experience of human physicality in the long nineteenth century and how it is reflected in German literature of the time. I study the trope of the body in Gerhart Hauptmann's *Die Weber*, Georg Büchner's *Woyzeck* and Franz Kafka's *Die Verwandlung*. I reveal how the constructed individual and collective bodies in these texts become sites of social, economic, political and cultural conflicts. By constructing, reconstructing and deconstructing human physicality, they negotiate and delineate the boundaries of human existence. Moreover, I show how these images of human physicality point back at and criticize the societies that produced them. All three texts construct an intertextual body which draws a bleak image of the human condition at the time. Human physicality in the modern age reveals itself as being in a state of denial, disappropriation and dehumanization. In response to this, all three texts demand a sociopolitical re-appropriation of the human body on an individual as well as collective level. This thesis raises awareness of a significant yet understudied subject in German literature and provides a starting point for further research in this field.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The end of the eighteenth century in Europe was marked by a number of unprecedented social, economic, political and cultural changes which had a tremendous impact on people's lives at the time. The forces of the Enlightenment, the industrialization and its new technology as well as the rise of capitalism and changing working conditions radically modified European societies (cf. Nautz 9f). These changes questioned and profoundly restructured traditional conceptions of individual and collective human existence (cf. Arendt 122). This development is also reflected in numerous cultural products that were created during the time period which is commonly called the "long nineteenth century" from 1789 to 1914 (Blackbourn xiv).

One way of studying the literary representation of these changing social, economic, political and cultural conditions is to look at the construction of human physicality in texts of the time. In particular, it is interesting to see how the experience of physicality is represented through individual and communal bodies. In a great number of fictional texts of the long nineteenth century, the human body is charged with meaning and is made to hold up a mirror to society. For many authors of the time, human physicality functions as a canvas which they may use to sketch and criticize the perception of human physicality and the consequences of changing sociopolitical conditions. The idea of reading the human body as a synecdoche of a larger group of people or the state has its origins in antiquity (cf. De Pisan 4). Yet, this approach is still

very prominent in contemporary times. The French philosopher Gilles Deleuze argues that "[e]very relationship of forces constitutes a body - whether it is chemical, biological, social or political. Any two forces, being unequal, constitute a body as soon as they enter into a relationship" (37). Hence, bodies can be read as sites of conflicts between opposing forces. Authors of literary texts can address, negotiate and criticize these different social, economic and political forces by representing them physically through constructed fictional bodies. Therefore, the representation of corrupted corporeality points back at and critiques the corrupted social, economic and political forces which produce them. Consequently, reading literary bodies in this fashion holds out the prospect of providing new and more profound insights into the politics and criticism of literary texts.

This insight raises a number of questions. How are socioeconomic and political changes as well as their direct and indirect impacts on the individual reflected in literary representations of physicality? How can concrete constructed bodies be read as manifestations and criticism of the conflicting social, economic and political conflicts forces in society? Three major works within the "long nineteenth century" that are rich in their representations of physicality are Gerhart Hauptmann's *Die Weber* (1892), Georg Büchner's *Woyzeck* (1836)[1] and Franz Kafka's *Die Verwandlung* (1915). The images of human physicality in these texts can be read as tangible and harrowing reifications of the often intangible social, economic and political undercurrents of the time. Consequently, contemporary perils for the individual and society become visceral to the audience through representations of the body. Hence, it is not only important to recognize that

[1] Actually the date of publication was 1879, but as *Woyzeck* was published after Büchner's death in 1837, it appears to be more reasonable to give the date the play was composed.

human physicality is affected by these changes in society. This alone would be hardly surprising. More importantly, however, it is necessary to realize that the versatile representation of the body, in the broad and narrow sense of the word, is a crucial element in these texts and provides new ways of reading them. The question is not only *if*, but rather *how* these texts represent the human body to negotiate and criticize the experience of human physicality in the modern age.

I argue that the representation of the body in the modern era narrates a story of its own across different works of German literature during the long nineteenth century. This dynamic and ever-changing story of human bodily experience negotiates the apparent social, economic and political changes in society on a literary level. *Die Weber, Woyzeck,* and *Die Verwandlung* are three pertinent texts that are particularly rich in their representations of the body. They relate corrupted corporeality to distinct forces and dynamics in society. Yet, the representation of the body has a distinct function for each individual work of literature. All three texts retain specific standpoints and problematize different aspects of human (physical) existence in the modern era. *Die Weber* illustrates the destructive impact of capitalist labor on human physicality and criticizes capitalist working conditions through representations of the weavers' bodies. *Woyzeck* draws attention to how science and militarism appropriate and shape the human body in the name of the Enlightenment. In *Die Verwandlung* the change of physical experience in the modern era is so prominent that it represents an image of its own which can be related to various social, economic, political and cultural forces. Primarily, however, the Gregor Samsa's body can be reads as a manifestation of the conflict between the individual and

society. All three texts use images of the body to confront the audience with the materialization of human denial, disappropriation and dehumanization in the modern age.

The negotiation of human physical experience is closely linked to a negotiation of human individual and collective existence in general. All three texts grapple with the issue of what it means to be human. By constructing, reconstructing and deconstructing human physicality, they delineate the boundaries of human existence while simultaneously suggesting a sociopolitical re-appropriation of the human body on an individual as well as collective level.

The first chapter of my analysis is dedicated to Gerhart Hauptmann's *Die Weber* and shows how the weavers are represented as living in an unnatural coexistence with capitalism. Moreover, I draw attention to the grotesque elements of their physical representation as individuals and as an entire social class. The following chapter is concerned with Georg Büchner's *Woyzeck* and reveals how science and militarism utilize Enlightenment thought to reduce human subjectivity to that of a mere test subject. The play depicts the human body as appropriated by the public, dehumanized through language, controlled in time and space, deteriorated and grotesque. Subsequently, I focus on the notion of human physicality in Franz Kafka's *Die Verwandlung*. First, I elucidate the Janus-faced character of the metamorphosis and its effect on the reader. The next part of the analysis concentrates on physical appropriation. After that I disclose the twofold function of language in the play as a means of denial and an image of failing communication between the individual and society. Finally, I point at the meaning of the grotesque body in the text. At the end of my project I sum up the most important findings of this study and evaluate its significance for further research in the field.

CHAPTER 2

"GESCHÖPFE DES WEBSTUHLS": REPRESENTATIONS OF THE BODY IN *DIE WEBER*

Gerhart Hauptmann's social drama *Die Weber*, which was published in 1892, is regarded as one of the most famous examples of German naturalism and also represents Hauptmann's most successful play (cf. Rothmann 227; cf. also Schildberg-Schroth 4). Many literary scholars have already studied this text using a great variety of scholarly approaches (cf. Schwab-Felisch 106). With respect to social, political and cultural issues in the play, literary criticism has focused predominantly on Hauptmann's representation of capitalism and Marxism (cf. Sniderman 317). Also, some scholars argue for the significance of the represented capitalist wage labor in the play (cf. Sniderman 319). Yet, the trope of the laboring body as a site of conflict itself appears to be understudied. Thus, an analysis of physicality in the text might lead to a better understanding of its social criticism in general and the portrayal of the physical dimension of labor and work under capitalism in particular.

Die Weber is particularly interesting in this regard because it has two different frames of reference. First of all, Hauptmann's play is about the Silesian weaver's rebellion in 1844. Yet, the fact that it was written almost fifty years later shows that the topic was still of importance for its author and the audience at the end of the nineteenth century. Thus, *Die Weber* can be read as a comment on the past, but also on the present (cf. Kroneberg 17f, 20; cf. also Schwab-Felisch 85).

The dual temporal frames of the play show that the physical experience of capitalist labor is a dominant issue at different points of time in the nineteenth century. Also, it reveals the importance of historicizing and negotiating real life experiences of capitalist labor and its sociopolitical backgrounds on a fictional level.

According to the German literary scholar Lutz Kroneberg Hauptmann's characters are marked by their living conditions and their sociopolitical environment (cf. 17). This also figures on a physical level. Interpreting the body as a site of conflict furthers the understanding of the social drama itself and provides insights into the particular social, political and cultural issues the play addresses and criticizes. The following analysis studies the most pertinent text passages that give an account on the weavers' laboring bodies in the play.

2.1 AN UNNATURAL PHYSICAL COEXISTENCE

One striking notion of physicality in the play is the fact that the human body seems to be almost entirely possessed and controlled by what Heidegger would describe as the essence of technology (cf. Heidegger, "Die Frage nach der Technik" 18, 34). The philosopher argues that the age of modernity is dominated by the essence of technology which rules and regulates modern working conditions. For Heidegger the essence of technology represents the ultimate realization of a materialistic metaphysic (ibid.). He defines it as an overarching governing principle, which conceives humans as the standing reserve (*Bestand*) of production. The standing reserve can be understood as everything which follows and executes the demands of the essence of technology (cf. 17f). Words like "Menschenmaterial" or the more contemporary notion of "human resources" represent linguistic manifestations of this idea (cf. 18). Yet, humans do not only act as the

standing reserve, but also command the standing reserve, for example by using technology as a tool. This use of technological tools, however, is in itself predetermined by the essence of technology (27ff). For Heidegger this superstructural dominance of the essence of technology over people's lives poses a threat to human existence and the essence of being human (cf. 28, 33).

Although Heidegger does not explicitly refer to capitalism in his essay "Die Frage nach der Technik", his deliberations on the essence of technology as the ultimate realization of the metaphysics of materialism shed light on the ways how capitalism operates as well. Capitalism and the governing principles of the essence of technology seem to be intertwined with one another. In a way, Heidegger's notion of technology illustrates the perception of humanity as the "Menschenmaterial" under capitalist labor (cf. Blitz 79). Thus, capitalism shapes and defines the principles by which the essence of technology operates. In *Die Weber* the subsistence of the weavers seems to be absolutely dependent on meeting the requirements of capitalism. Often they figure as what Heidegger would call the "Menschenmaterial". Their bodies appear to be puppets of capitalist labor that are merely kept alive to stay functional for the system before they are finally killed when they are not needed anymore. Proof for this can be found throughout the entire play.

Hauptmann's stage directions are a very significant and often neglected element of his social drama (cf. Sniderman 322). The author's requests for the theatrical realization of his play are very yielding as they provide a concrete idea of what the playwright wants his characters to look like on stage. Time and again he gives a detailed account of their physiognomy. The first act shows the weavers handing in their cotton fabric to be

checked by the clerk Pfeifer. The scene takes place in the front hall of Dreißiger's estate, who is the factory owner and therefore the boss of all the cotton weavers. An excerpt from the stage directions provides a meticulous description of the weavers' physiognomy. It reads:

> Die meisten der harrenden Webersleute gleichen Menschen, die vor die Schranken des Gerichts gestellt sind, wo sie in peinigender Gespanntheit eine Entscheidung über Tod und Leben zu erwarten haben. Hinwiederum haftet allen etwas Gedrücktes, dem Almosenempfänger Eigentümliches an, der, von Demütigung zu Demütigung schreitend, im Bewußtsein, nur gedultet zu sein, sich so klein als möglich zu machen gewohnt ist [...] Die Männer, einander ähnelnd, halb zwerghaft, halb schulmeisterlich, sind in der Mehrzahl flachbrüstige, hüstelnde, ärmliche Menschen mit schmutzigblasser Gesichtsfarbe: Geschöpfe des Webstuhls, deren Knie infolge des vielen Sitzens gekrümmt sind. (Hauptmann 7)

This block quotation shows that the clerk's assessment of the weavers' labor is rendered as a matter of life and death. Instead of being dependent on nature by producing their own means of subsistence, the weavers have given in to the demands for production which are prescribed by the essence of technology which is in operation in a capitalist society (cf. Heidegger 18, 34). It is not nature itself which maintains the weavers' survival but the interposed system of capitalism that may or may not provide the individual with the means to ensure his or her own survival (cf. Sniderman 320).

This existential dependency is also illustrated on a physical level. They look hunched, humble and anxious and try to make themselves as small as possible. Figuratively speaking, the weight on their shoulders, that is, the economic pressure they experience makes their bodies slump. They are debased to a lower form of being. This is reflected in their bent posture and their cringing. Moreover, the stage directions describe the weavers as "zwergenhaft." This dwarfish appearance makes them seem to be in an unnatural and grotesque physical condition. In this respect, the shrinking of the body goes along with a shrinking of their own essence of being in the Heideggerian sense. On the one hand the essence of technology uses the weavers as the commander (*Besteller*) of the standing reserve (*Bestand*) – in this case the weaving looms – but on the other hand, it also uses them as part of the standing reserve itself (cf. Heidegger, "Die Frage nach der Technik" 30f). In either way, they lose their agency and become the ones controlled instead of being the ones in control. The loss of their agency signifies their loss of their human dignity and humanness in general.

In addition, the weavers' bodies are depicted as malnourished, sick and weak. Hauptmann uses the word "flachbrüstig", to express this. According to Gerhard Schildberg-Schroth, hunger is an important motif that runs through the entire play and manifests itself in various occasions (cf. 28). The adjective "hüstelnd" in the block quotation points out the weavers' bad health and sickness. Moreover, Hauptmann uses the word "ärmlich" to elucidate that their pecuniary poverty manifests itself in their physical appearance. Thus, a low standard of living gets translated into a poor physical condition. The oxymoron "schmutzigblass" hints at the fact that there is nothing beautiful about the weavers' paleness. It is not an immaculate paleness. Instead, their paleness is a sign of

physical corruption. It signifies sickness and despair rather than beauty and youthful innocence.

The most powerful metaphor in this passage is probably the phrase "Geschöpfe des Webstuhls". It suggests that the weavers are not brought to life by nature, but by the weaving looms, which are representative of the essence of technology. In line with Hannah Arendt this metaphor discloses that the weavers' dependency on nature was replaced by an existential dependence on capitalism (cf. 93, 115f). The capitalist machine, in a narrow and a broad sense, has taken on an organic existence. It gives life to a human being, raises, nourishes and shapes it according to its own principles before it kills it when he or she loses their use for the subsistence of the capitalist organism. If one understands the body as the first property of every human being, the weavers are completely expropriated in *Die Weber* (cf. Schwab-Felisch 111f). It seems as if they lost their bodies and that they now belong to the capitalist factory owners.

If one understands God as the "Schöpfer," it is also possible to argue that capitalism has replaced God as the giver and taker of human life. Just like God created man after His own image to be His "Geschöpf" – a fundamental notion in the Christian tradition – capitalism creates the weavers, whose physicality is conspicuously shaped and scarred by its modes of production. Due to the extremely exhausting labor with the weaving looms, the weavers' knees are described as "gekrümmt." The results of strenuous labor are reflected in the bodies of those who do it (cf. also Sniderman 321). Capitalism has taken its toll and shapes human life and bodily existence in a way that it becomes most productive and profitable for the larger-than-life capitalist machine. The human

beings, on the other side, appear to be crooked and made to be submissive to their new "creator".

Just like the pious and devoted believer of God is rewarded with divine grace, so is the diligent laborer rewarded with what Pfeifer defines as a good life. He remarks "Wer gut webt, der gut lebt" (Hauptmann 10). Thus, an allegedly "good" life is achievable by submission to capitalist labor relations and one's capability to produce for the system. The rhyme of "webt" and "lebt" even adds a harmonious and playful tone which has a chilling contrary effect as it intensifies the grim atmosphere of agony and desperation. Pfeifer uses this platitudinous slogan to legitimize the logic of capitalism. Thus, language functions as a means of naturalizing the workers' existential dependence on capitalism as the giver and taker of human life. The rhyme "webt" / "lebt" suggests that both elements are congenial with one another and that their relationship is therefore natural.

The stage directions at the beginning of the second act also provide very insightful clues for this analysis. Hauptmann describes the weavers of the Baumert family as follows:

> [Das rosafarbene Licht] fällt auf das weißblonde, offene Haar der Mädchen, auf ihre unbekleideten, magern Schultern und dünnen wächsernen Nacken [...] Der alten Frau leuchtet der warme Hauch voll über Gesicht, Hals und Brust: ein Gesicht abgemagert zum Skelett, mit Falten und Runzeln in einer blutlosen Haut, mit versunkenen Augen, die durch Wollstaub, Rauch und Arbeit bei Licht entzündlich gerötet und wäßrig sind, einen langen Kropfhals mit Falten und

> Sehnen, eine eingefallene, mit verschossenen Tüchern und Lappen verpackte Brust. (18)

The young girls appear to be worn down physically by their exhausting labor. Their slenderness points at the fact that they are undernourished. Apparently, their daily hard labor does not only deteriorate their bodily condition; it also does not suffice to allay their hunger. The old mother of the family is wrinkled and looks very old. Her body is so undernourished and weak that she resembles a skeleton. There seems to be no more blood in her veins which makes it seem as if she was already dead. Figuratively speaking, her labor has sucked the life out of her. The unhealthy conditions of her labor have harmed her eyes and corrupted her eyesight. Thence, her physical state is yet another example of how the weavers are molded by their everyday labor under capitalism.

The human bodies in this scene appear to be lifeless. In contrast to that, the machines they are working with seem very much alive. Their vibrant sounds and motion fill the dark and very small room with artificial life and energy:

> Das Getöse der Webstühle, das rhythmische Gewuchte der Lade, davon Erdboden und Wände erschüttert werden, das Schlurren und Schnappen des hin und her geschnellten Schiffchens erfüllen den Raum. Da hinein mischt sich das tiefe, gleichmäßig fortgesetzte Getön der Spulräder, das dem Summen großer Hummeln gleicht (18).

In addition to Pfeifer's rhyme "wer gut webt, der gut lebt" this passage suggests another musical element. In a way, the sound of labor has become the rhythm of these weavers' lives. They have adapted to this preordained rhythm of capitalism, which has by now taken control of their bodies. The beat of the sonorous machines determines and regulates the motions of the weavers but also seems to replace the lacking heartbeat of their lifeless bodies. It almost seems as if the ghost-like weavers are kept alive by the machines they are working with. This notion ties in with Arendt's understanding that the capitalist machine has replaced nature in its role as a life-providing prerequisite of human existence (cf. 93). The impression of the sound of labor is stressed by Hauptmann's use of stylistic devices, like the onomatopoeiae "Gewuchte," "Schlurren" und "Schnappen" and the alliteration in "das Schlurren und Schnappen des hin und her geschnellten Schiffchens" (18). The rhythmic pattern of speech illustrates the mechanical and repetitive working procedure that gives a rhythm to these people's lives. Thus, Hauptmann seems to ascribe both a rhyme and a rhythm to capitalism. Taking both of these into account, it seems as if he models the weavers as puppets who dance to the tune of capitalism.

It is also interesting to see that the sound of these machines is compared to sounds in nature. The stage directions define the sound of the coils as "das tiefe, gleichmäßig fortgesetzte Getön […] das dem Summen großer Hummeln gleicht" (18). Instead of working in nature and being closely related to and integrated into it, the modern laborer is alienated from nature and operates machines in small, dark and confining rooms that hardly allow any sunlight. The stage directions indicate that the weavers have become so used to being inside that machines appear to be natural and organic beings. Therefore, the

simile is not in the least to be understood positively. Rather, it stresses the weavers' alienation from nature and the bleak condition they find themselves in.

This scene is just another example for the fact that capitalism has replaced nature and taken on an organic connotation. Under the inhumane working conditions of modern capitalism these machines seem to have thrived and have become the new nature for people. Capitalism, however, only provides as much life as required to ensure that the "standing reserve" and the commanders (the weavers) remain productive (cf. Heidegger 30f). At the same time, everything about the human body which is not necessarily needed for the production becomes dispensable and decays. In a way, there even seems to be a vampiric motif in the play as the audience gets to watch how capitalist machines and capitalism itself feed on the weavers and gain life by sucking all energy and vitality out of them. Yet, they try to keep the workers alive to make sure that they can keep on feeding on them in the future.

Against the backdrop of the stage directions of the first and the second acts it seems as if *Die Weber* tells a bodily narrative of continuous and aggravating physical deterioration caused by perpetual labor in the capitalist society. That is why the stage directions of the fifth act are probably the most serious description of the physical consequences of labor. In contrast to previous renderings of the weavers' physiognomy, it is also the first time that Hauptmann draws an explicit connection between physical decay and labor when he describes the weaver Hilse:

> ein bärtiger, starkknochiger, aber nun von Alter, Arbeit, Krankheit und Strapazen gebeugter und verfallener Mann. Veteran, einarmig. Er ist spitznasig, von fahler

> Gesichtsfarbe, zittrig, scheinbar nur Haut, Knochen und Sehnen und hat die tiefliegenden, charakteristischen, gleichsam wunden Weberaugen. (Hauptmann 56)

Hilse's bodily decay is represented as the result of his hard labor as a weaver. The word "gebeugter" can refer to his hunched body, but coming from the same word family as the verb "sich beugen" it can also mean that he resigned himself to the overarching power structures of capitalism. Accordingly, he decides against participating in the weavers' rebellion against the authorities.

His bodily appearance is basically reduced to skin, bones and sinews. He has lost an arm, his skin is pale and he has what Hauptmann calls characteristic "Weberaugen". His eyes are corrupted by his work and the neologism "Weberaugen" defines a physical phenomenon that seems to be shared by all people who are engaged in this field of physical labor. Thus, it becomes a "typical" medical condition for all weavers to have injured eyes. Labor and physicality conflate and become one. The corrupted body of the weaver becomes distinguishable from other people's physical realities for it is marked by labor. While labor claims their bodies as a sacrifice, the weavers become disenfranchised of their own bodies. Nevertheless, Hilse keeps on working to provide for the family and so does his wife, Mutter Hilse, who is depicted as old, blind and almost deaf. Yet, she does not stop working to contribute to the family's income (cf. 56f).

The physical narrative of the play culminates in Hilse's death. He turns down the weavers' request to participate in the revolt and dies working with the weaving loom. Even though he does not die from his own labor but by a stray bullet which was meant

for the revolting weavers, it is his refusal to struggle for a change that brings about his own death. Because he remains stubborn in submitting to the given working relations, Hauptmann has him die. The message of the play appears to be: If the weavers keep on weaving and thereby accept the miserable laboring conditions they are suffering from, it will ultimately result in their inevitable death. Metaphorically speaking, by being compliant with the prevalent working relations the weavers weave their own shroud. Also, Hilse's belief that he can stay out of the conflict between weavers and factory owners is refuted. Instead, the play argues that this social injustice affects everyone, which is why it involves everyone, too.

Even though weaving was still a source of income for many people when *Die Weber* was performed for the first time, Hauptmann's audience in the 1890s was probably more likely to read the play as a more general take on unjust labor conditions within society against the backdrop of a specific historic event. William H. Rey points at Mutter Hilse's last words before her husband dies to elucidate the contemporary relevance of the play: "Die Aktualitat des Stückes [...] erweist sich am deutlichsten in den letzten Worten der Mutter Hilse, die, zu dem Toten [Hilse] gewandt, sagt: "'s kann een'n ja orntlich angst werd'n' [...]. Sie spricht damit das Schlüsselwort für die Stimmung unserer Zeit aus, die in der Tat im Zeichen der Angst vor der globalen Katastrophe steht" (160).

As has been shown the negotiation of bodily experience under capitalism is a very prominent and meaningful motif in *Die Weber*. The next part of this chapter reveals how the concept of the grotesque body can even further and deepen an understanding of constructed physicality in the play.

2.2 A GROTESQUE BODY

The grotesque body is a motif that permeates the entire play and can be studied focusing on different aspects of the concept. An essential element of the grotesque body in theory and in the play is the permeable distinction between life and death. Michail Bakhtin claims that the grotesque body incorporates both life and death and that the processes of living and dying can take place at the same time (cf. Thomson 18; cf. also Hutchinson 188; cf. also Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 26). Frequently, the weavers' physical experience of being alive is represented as being dead. For example, Becker says "ob ich am Webstuhl d'rhungere oder in Straßengrab'n, das is mir egal" (Hauptmann 13). For him it does not matter whether he works or not, he feels that he is starving to death in any case. In the same scene there is an eight-year-old boy who collapses in the front hall and looks as if he is dead because he is so exhausted from the hard labor he is required to do (cf. 13). Later, in the second act, Mutter Baumert says that her daughters don't seem to have any more blood in their veins and remarks that they look just as pale as white sheets:

> Wie sehn die Mädel aus!? Kee Blut haben se bald nimehr in sich. An Farbe haben se wie de Leintiecher. Das geht doch immer fort mit dem Schemeltreten, ob's aso an Mädel dient oder nich. Was hab'n die fer a bißl Leben. 's ganze Jahr kommen se nich vom Bänkl runter. […] Aussehen tun se wie de Galgengeschlinke, junge Mädel von funfzehn und zwanzig. (22f)

Obviously, they don't look alive. It becomes more and more difficult to differentiate between living and dead bodies. In the same scene Frau Heinrich claims that she feels rather dead than alive (cf. 20). Welzel adds to this idea when he compares another weaver named Fabich, who has recently died, to a walking ghost (cf. 31).

Moreover, there are the weavers' suicidal thoughts and tendencies which become apparent in various scenes. Mutter Baumert expresses this notion when she remarks "[f]er unsereens, Heinrichen, wärsch am besten, d'r liebe Gott tät a Einsehn hab'n und nähm uns gar von der Welt" (20). In the fifth act Hilse expresses a death wish when he says "[o] viel zu gerne, viel zu gerne tät ich Feierabend machen. Zum Sterben ließ ich mich gewiß ni lange bitten. Lieber heut wie morgen […] Das Häufel Himmelsangst und Schinderei da, das ma Leben nennt, das ließ man gerne genug im Stiche" (64). The thought of death appears to be more attractive than the thought of maintaining one's miserable existence. A life as the "standing reserve" in a capitalist society does not seem to be worth living. The essence of technology dehumanizes humanity and is therefore hostile to human life. In another scene the weaver Baumert suggests taking one's own life just like weaver Nentwich did it, when he hung himself using a weaving loom (cf. 15). Again, the weaving loom is representative of capitalism as it gives and takes human life in a newly established organic coexistence between humanity and the capitalist machine. Significantly, the play ends with a death on a weaving loom when a stray bullet hits the old Hilse and makes him slump down on the loom he is working with (cf. 71). The loom becomes the metaphor of a gatekeeper between life and death. As a symbol of the overarching essence of technology it reconciles life and death and makes living and dying indistinguishable from one another. So, in a sense, Hilse has been dead all along.

This notion is also reflected in the Weberlied as the first four lines read "Hier im Ort ist ein Gericht, / noch schlimmer als die Vehmen, / wo man nicht erst ein Urteil spricht, / das Leben schnell zu nehmen." (28). It shows that the historic weavers, who came up with the song, and Hauptmann's characters in his play feel as if the capitalist system decides about their lives and sentences them to death while disregarding any sense of justice. The Weberlied is not only interesting in terms of its content but also as a musical device that provides a new rhythm to the weavers' lives. Figuratively, it represents their heartbeat which stands in contrast to the roaring machines the weavers are made to work with. Their singing, which gets louder and louder during the course of the play, has them regain their lives (cf. Hildebrandt 40, 52). It symbolizes a reclaim and reaffirmation of humanness.

Another feature of the grotesque body is the recurrent comparison of man and beast (cf. Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 16). The stage directions and the characters describe various weavers as feral or animal-like. Ansorge's hair and his beard look "stark verwildert," (Hauptmann 19) that is, very wild and unkempt. At the beginning of the second act the stage directions indicate that August has a "kleine[n] Rumpf und Kopf und lange[], spinnenartige[] Extremitäten" (18). Der Reisende exoticizes Ansorge derogatively as something foreign, outdated and therefore fascinating when he quips "[s]olche urkräftige Naturmenschen sind heutzutage sehr selten. Wir sind von der Kultur so beleckt . . . aber ich hab' noch Freude an der Urwüchsigkeit. Buschige Augenbrauen! So'n wilder Bart […] Darf man dem Haarmenschen n' Glas Bier anbieten?" (33).

By calling them "Naturmenschen" der Reisende denies these people their humanness as Homo sapiens. He represents them as animal-like beings of a lower kind.

The term "Natur" is ascribed to them to represent their physical and mental backwardness. Thus, nature is represented as something negative and outdated. People who still bond with nature appear to be lost in evolution as they have not successfully adapted to the modern era of capitalism. The word "Haarmenschen" adds to this effect of making the weavers look like beasts as their physical appearance is reduced to their hair. In another scene Jäger comments on the weaver's lives saying "[d]a leben ja in a Städten de Hunde noch besser wie ihr" (23). He describes them as being on the same level as animals while living under worse conditions than some of them. When the weavers start the rebellion, Pastor Kittelhaus speaks of the weavers as uncivilized "Wölfe" (51) and Dreißiger calls them "Hunde" and "Bestien, die man demgemäß behandeln wird" (ibid.). Language is clearly used to legitimize and solidify prevailing power relations. The act of calling someone an animal is a means of othering, which, by implication, makes the speaker appear to be (more) human (cf. Fuß 471). Hence, capitalists and members of the upper class are rendered as human while members of the working class are debased to the status of animals, which need others as leaders in order to subsist.

It is striking that the animal image is so prominent throughout the book. In the tradition of the grotesque human and animalistic traits of characters are mixed and become unsettling for the audience as they break with what is considered normal and in order (cf. Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 16). Thus, this motif points at a distortion of the weavers' bodies, but also of the body politic as such. It discloses that something is not right about the system and that it has lost its humanness by allowing people to "become" animals. Since labor is everywhere and represents the weavers' only human activity on earth they turn into what Arendt describes as the "animal laborans," a being which has lost its

human essence and is reduced to its capacity to labor for its own survival (cf. 83, cf. also 87).

Another very powerful image of the play that can be tied in with the discussion of the bestiality of man is the scene when the old Baumert decides to eat the family's former pet dog Armin. Out of hunger the family has their dog slaughtered and Baumert's wife cooks it for them. However, when Baumert tries to devour his own dog, he can't keep it inside his body and has to throw up (cf. 20f, 27). For the audience it is already a highly disturbing image that the family decides to eat their own dog. Yet, when Baumert vomits, it becomes even more unsettling because killing the dog does not even fulfill its purpose.

The mouth is arguably the most important body part for the literary method of the grotesque as it is used to interact with one's environment (cf. Bakhtin, *Literatur* 19, 24). In most occasions this interaction manifests itself as an integration of the world into the body or an extrusion of bodily substances into the world. That is why the acts of breathing, eating and drinking, but also spitting and vomiting are crucial themes of the grotesque method (Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 17). Baumert's decision to kill the dog was not really his own, but was rather induced by the system. Thus, by eating the dog, Baumert enters a physical interaction with the world and consumes what capitalism has left for him. Because it is so degrading and inhumane to eat one's own pet dog, Hauptmann has Baumert throw up. While it also shows that Baumert is not used to eating meat anymore, it is more important to read this scene as criticism of the unequal distribution of goods under capitalism that make people act against their own will as individuals and human beings. In this scene Baumert is forced to kill what he loves. It is not by accident that Baumert's pet has a name. It personalizes the dog and stresses that he is a part of the

family, which even adds to the effect of unsettling horror. Baumert's body rebels against the physical and psychological agonies capitalism imposes upon him. Hauptmann makes this struggle visceral by having Baumert gag and vomit.

After storming Dreißiger's mansion the old Baumert loots the factory owner's pantry and eats as much as he can. This time, however, he can keep the food to himself, feels healthy and happy (cf. Hauptmann 66). In contrast to the family's pet dog, it seems to be food that is meant and good for him. It accounts for a fairer system and a more equal distribution of goods. This consumption of the world is rendered as tolerable and right. The world of the outside is successfully integrated into the human body. It suggests a balance of the physical inside and outside.

Another crucial notion of the the grotesque body is the concept of its cosmic symbolism, which ties in with the idea of the body politic. For Bakhtin and others the body is related to both the earth and the universe and represents the people as a whole (Bakhtin, *Literatur* 19). A number of reasons speak for the fact that the audience is supposed to read the weavers as a collective social class rather than as individuals. The play does not have a protagonist, the weavers are described as "einander ähnelnd" (Hauptmann 7) and they share the same dialect which distinguishes them from the bourgeoisie (cf. also Hildebrandt 38). They form and are meant to be perceived as a communal body. This body functions as an expression of systematic injustice against the individual and society as a whole.

If one reads the weavers' physical condition as symptomatic for the entire working class, *Die Weber* seems to suggest that this whole social stratum is sick, weak and poor. They might even represent one particular body part of the body politic. Just as

the leader of a society is usually represented as the "head" of state, the weavers might stand for the bottom of society. Hence, it is not only the individual who is living and dying at the same time, but an entire social body which is decaying from the bottom up and prone to self-destruction. Both the grotesque body and the grotesque society are represented as the results of the social, economic and political changes due to the rise capitalism.

In this respect it is important to note that the representation of physicality in *Die Weber* does not only have a descriptive purpose. Instead, it functions as a means of social criticism. The play holds society in general accountable for the physical deterioration of its members and of itself since it acts as the "producer" of these individual and collective bodies. Moreover, Hauptmann stages the historical rebellion of the weavers which can also be read as a resistance against physical oppression. The staging of the historical rebellion in the play also seems to speak out in favor of a resistance against social injustice during the time and context of its publication. The weavers do not only seek to reclaim the rights to their own bodies, but also their rights as human beings in general. This is suggested when the factory owners and their partners blame the rise of humanist thought and the "Humanitätsdusler" for the rise of the weavers' rebellion (Hauptmann 50f). Despite their severe bodily deterioration, the weavers strive to remain human and retain their agency by forming a rebellion and resisting against the oppressive system. It shows that for Hauptmann it is still in the people's power to do overcome their (physical) dehumanization by revolting against the governing sociopolitical forces that bring about this social decay.

This chapter has shown that the laboring body is a very prominent image in Gerhart Hauptmann's *Die Weber*. Stage directions and characters provide wide-ranging and often meticulous descriptions of the weavers and their physical experience of labor under capitalism. While *Die Weber* lacks an actual protagonist and focuses on a collective physical experience of capitalist labor, *Woyzeck* describes the individual physical experience of the eponymous protagonist who suffers from the impact of modern science. Georg Büchner's drama expands the perspective on the constructed human body as a site of conflicts in the long nineteenth century. It shows that not only capitalism but also the Enlightenment as the phenomenon that actually produced capitalism shapes the human body in a certain way. The following chapter focuses on the human body as a subject of the Enlightenment in general and militarism and science and in particular.

CHAPTER 3

FROM SUBJECT TO TEST SUBJECT: THE MAKING OF A HUMAN RESOURCE IN *WOYZECK*

Georg Büchner's highly influential play *Woyzeck*, which he wrote in 1837 (cf. Richards xi), represents a quite peculiar case for this project. The scholar David G. Richards concludes his survey on the history of literary criticism on *Woyzeck* with the following words: "Considering how much has been written about this short play, one might think that little or nothing remains to be said, but given the resourcefulness of scholars and the inevitable development of new approaches to the analysis of texts, the ongoing process of discovery will surely continue" (146). It is my firm belief that a critical analysis of the representation of physicality in the play holds out the prospect of significant insights into the meaning of the play and its social criticism.

The protagonist Woyzeck is employed as a soldier and a test subject for medical experiments. In both ways he sacrifices his body to survive and provide for his family. Woyzeck's and his family's subsistence are only possible if he accepts his own physical disenfranchisement and simultaneous bodily deterioration. Whereas the weavers are paid for yielding a product while losing their physical health in the process, Woyzeck only offers his body to be used, corrupted and destroyed without producing anything himself. The military uses his body as a dispensable human resource for war while science perceives him as a mere biological organism whose mere value lies in his suitability as a test subject. Consequently, Woyzeck's body is constantly at stake and dehumanized. The

loss of his right to his own body and his perpetual physical degeneration lead to a loss of reason which culminates in hallucinations and the murder of his own wife. More than the weavers, Woyzeck loses his agency as a human being. . This chapter focuses on five larger concepts of physicality in Woyzeck: the appropriation of Woyzeck's body through the military and science, language as a tool of dehumanization, the reorganization of time and space, mental and physical deterioration and the notion of the grotesque body.

3.1 THE APPROPRIATION OF THE HUMAN BODY

In his book *Homo Sacer* the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben claims that "at the threshold of the modern era, natural life begins to be included in the mechanisms and calculations of State power, and politics turns into *biopolitics*" (3, emphasis in original). Drawing upon this Foucauldian notion, Agamben contends that the "entry of the *zoe* into the sphere of the *polis* – the politicization of bare life as such – constitutes the decisive event of modernity and signals a radical transformation of the political-philosophical categories of classical thought" (4). It is this political appropriation of bare human existence, which defines and shapes social, political and cultural power relations in the modern era. According to Agamben "the inclusion of bare life in the political realm constitutes the original – if concealed – nucleus of sovereign power. *It can even be said that the production of a biopolitical body is the original activity of sovereign power*" (6, emphasis original).

Thus, the production of a particular body has a seminal political function as bodies represent instruments of power. The human body is shaped in a way that it becomes "docile" and controllable. Obviously, this development has an impact on the physical dimension of human existence as well. For Agamben "the species and the

individual as a simple living body become what is at stake in a society's political strategies" (3). While Agamben's explanations remain a bit vague when it comes to describing who it is that shapes the body in the modern era and how exactly this is done, his conception of the appropriated body is helpful for this analysis. In *Woyzeck* the military and in particular science appropriate and exploit the human body.

One way of demonstrating how science exerts power over human physical existence in *Woyzeck* is by looking at the relationship between the doctor and the protagonist. For the doctor Woyzeck is literally just a test subject and not a human being like himself. Because of the contract between the two, the doctor feels legitimized to treat him as he pleases. He does not allow Woyzeck to eat anything but peas in order to find a substance called "Hyperoxydul" in his urine. By trying to gain new insights into the human organism, he puts the protagonist's health at stake (cf. Büchner 19). The audience never learns about any medical benefit of finding this substance in Woyzeck's body. Thus, there seems to be no practical reason for the experiment. Gaining new knowledge is the sole purpose of his actions. It is merely science for science's sake. Accordingly, scientists do not act in the interest of all people but only in their own. Instead of trying to find cures for sicknesses, the doctor makes people sick only to gain fame and respect in the scientific community (cf. Richards 87). By displaying the devastating impact of modern science on Woyzeck's body, the play does not only criticize science, but also rationalism and Enlightenment thought in general.

The doctor is shown as excited whenever he becomes able to observe the negative physical and mental effects of Woyzeck's malnutrition. When he notices the deteriorating physical impact after three months of the treatment, he rewards Woyzeck with a financial

bonus for being such an interesting "Phänomen" (Büchner 23, cf. also 24). Also, he is delighted about Woyzeck's mental decay, which reveals itself by a number of delusions and hallucinations: "Woyzeck er hat die schönste Aberratio mentalis partialis, der zweiten Species, sehr schön ausgeprägt, Woyzeck er kriegt Zulage" (20). Consequently, he grants Woyzeck another bonus. He pays Woyzeck more money in order to make him stay his test subject a bit longer, so that he can prolong and intensify his observable physical and mental deterioration. In *Woyzeck* scientific interest and the satisfaction of a perverse personal desire go hand in hand and surpass the protection of an individual's right to one's body.

It is striking to note that next to science there are also a number of other agents of the Enlightenment which facilitate and legitimize this oppressive relationship between the doctor and Woyzeck. Wage labor facilitates the hierarchy between the rich and the poor while the law legitimizes this relationship by legal contracts (cf. Pethes 74). Interestingly enough, the doctor even refers to his contract with Woyzeck while he talks to him (cf. Büchner 19). Consequently, a person's individual rights of freedom, independence and self-determination are obliterated in the name of reason. Quite ironically, the Enlightenment and reason in the play do not make Woyzeck free and autonomous but set the stage for his exploitation, disenfranchisement and dehumanization in society.

Despite the unhealthy malnutrition that has been imposed upon Woyzeck, science does not seek to harm Woyzeck to a degree where he becomes incapable of doing his duties in society. While human health becomes dispensable, the human body remains a means of political power which people with authority can use for their own purposes. Consequently, a body needs to be alive in order to retain its functionality. The doctor

feels free to do whatever he wants with Woyzeck as long as he remains fit enough to remain his test subject and the military's soldier.

For this reason the doctor makes sure that Woyzeck keeps following his instructions and remains productive:

> Doctor: Er tut noch alles wie sonst, rasiert seinen Hauptmann!
>
> Woyzeck: Immer ordentlich Herr Doctor! [...]
>
> Doctor: Tut seinen Dienst.
>
> Woyzeck: Ja wohl.
>
> Doctor: Er ist ein interessanter Casus, Subjekt Woyzeck er kriegt Zulage. Halt er sich brav. (20)

This passage is a perfect example of how the doctor transforms Woyzeck into what Agamben would call the "docile bod[y]" (3). The doctor provides Woyzeck with the bare minimum of the means to survive, ensures his productivity and urges him to stay good. Thus, he creates the "perfect" body: Woyzeck is cheap, productive, submissive and therefore perfectly controllable. In a similar fashion, the doctor is disappointed when he sees Woyzeck urinating outside his office. Since he strives for a rational control of mind over matter, watching Woyzeck lose the control over his natural needs is greatly disheartening for him. From his soberly scientific point of view the "nature" of the human body is something despicable. In his opinion, the human body must not just *be*, but must be controlled. His idea of total rational control over the body simultaneously stands for the total denial of natural human needs and desires.

In a way, science enacts the new biopolitics and forges the bodies the authorities in society need to perpetuate an imbalance of power. Science is used to answer the following questions: What does it take to keep a human alive and productive? Which means of subsistence are dispensable and which are indispensable? How much stress, malnutrition, humiliation and victimization can a human endure while remaining productive? Science and the military act as forces of negation since they reduce the versatile possibilities of human existence to the mere purpose of being a human resource. Thus, *Woyzeck* stages and criticizes the appropriation of human physicality in the modern era.

3.2 DEHUMANIZATION THROUGH LANGUAGE

It is not surprising that the use of language is regarded as one of the most important aspects of the play in literary criticism (cf. McCarthy 551, cf. also Ullmann 10ff). For the project at hand it is striking to note that language figures as a very powerful tool for the objectification of Woyzeck and the simultaneous perpetuation of the social hierarchy between him and the doctor. The doctor speaks to Woyzeck in the third person singular instead of addressing him with the second person singular or the formal voice. Hence, he denies him his subjectivity. Instead, he turns Woyzeck into an object which is rather to be talked about than to be spoken to. In the process the doctor reifies an imbalance of power by portraying himself as the human above and Woyzeck as the nonhuman being below.

Yet, it is not only the way how the doctor addresses Woyzeck, but also his diction which discloses the objectification and dehumanization of the protagonist in the play. When the doctor sees him urinating against a wall on the way to his office, the doctor

uses the verb "pissen," (Büchner 19), a term which is usually used to talk about urinating animals. If it is used to talk about human beings, it sounds derogatory and coarse. Moreover, he addresses Woyzeck as a "Bestie" (25) – a noun which people normally utilize to talk about unpleasant animals. Quite fittingly, the doctor also calls Woyzeck a "Hund" (19). These words debase Woyzeck to the level of a nonhuman being. Through linguistic means Woyzeck is made into the figurative guinea pig he has been treated like all along.

The fact that the doctor calls him a "casus," a "subject" (20) and a "Phänomen" (23) even intensifies this effect. At the same time, by using these stilted scientific terms, the doctor presents himself as the intellectual scientist who looks down upon a mere test subject. In a way he stresses, perpetuates and aggravates the imbalance of power between the two characters (cf. Gray 82f). This constructed disequilibrium makes himself appear to be the rational human being and marks Woyzeck as irrational and nonhuman (cf. Fuß 310ff). By linguistic means the doctor enframes Woyzeck's existence to the mere purpose of being a physical test subject for scientific experiments. As both the Hauptmann and the doctor show, they don't want him to think on his own (cf. Büchner 17). He is merely supposed execute orders.

Another significant type of language in the play is the scientific language of lecturing. The doctor does not only use Woyzeck's body for his own research, but also exhibits him as a scientific object to his students who are asked to scrutinize and touch him (cf. 25). The scientific fascination with the human body in the age of reason has gone so far that science has ceased to see human beings holistically, but merely as physiological organisms that have no personality and are indistinguishable from

nonhuman beings. Human identity is reduced to the notion of an animate corpus that can be inspected and touched. The only value of humanity lies in its use for science.

Soon after the cat runs away and thereby refuses to be the doctor's subject any longer, the doctor uses Woyzeck as a substitute for the nonhuman animal. After the doctor makes Woyzeck wiggle with his ears, he tells his students

> "So meine Herrn, das sind so Übergänge zum Esel, häufig auch in Folge weiblicher Erziehung, und die Muttersprache, wie viele Haare hat dir deine Mutter schon ausgerissen aus Zärtlichkeit. Sie sind dir ja ganz dünn geworden, seit ein paar Tagen, ja die Erbsen, meine Herren" (25).

This passage illustrates what the scholar Bo Ullmann designates as the doctor's cold and brutal way of lecturing (cf. 105). Sardonically, the doctor notices that Woyzeck's hair has become thinner due to his malnutrition and makes his students aware of it. He has no sympathy for Woyzeck and feels no pity for his physiological decay. From a scientific perspective the doctor just sees the connection of cause and effect.

Also, the doctor compares Woyzeck to a nonhuman being again when he equates his features and behavior with those of a donkey. By doing that he diminishes the distinctions between human and animalistic life. In contrast to the cat, which decides to run away, Woyzeck obeys the doctor better than the animal. Ironically, he is therefore better conditioned to be the test object than his predecessor. The cat has more willpower and a greater sense of independence than Woyzeck. It shows how much Woyzeck

submits himself to the doctor in particular and the new biopolitics in general even though he suffers from them mentally and physically.

It becomes clear that doctor uses language to legitimize and perpetuates the existing oppressive power relations between himself and Woyzeck as his test object. Against this backdrop, the doctor's words "[w]as erleb' ich Woyzeck? Ein Mann von Wort" (19) gain a metaphorical meaning next to the more obvious sense of keeping one's word. Being "ein Mann von Wort" can also mean that Woyzeck is being made into who or what he is by the use of a particular language. In other words, Woyzeck's existence as a human being is determined by the word, that is, the use of language in a rationalist society. It is the language science uses to interpret and make sense of the world. Thus, it does not only give meaning to the world, but also to human (physical) existence. As an agent of the Enlightenment it helps shape the human body in a way that it becomes an available resource for science and the military. Against this backdrop, Büchner's play can be considered a counter-text, which uncovers and deconstructs the oppressive power of language by portraying its restrictive and destructive impact on people through language itself.

3.3 TIME, SPACE AND THE HUMAN BODY

Woyzeck's body completely acquiesces to a rational reorganization of time and space. The doctor and the military tell him, when and where he is supposed to be. For this reason his body appears to be in a constant state of stress and restlessness. The stage directions indicate that "Woyzeck kommt gelaufen" (22) and that he "[g]eht mit breiten Schritten ab, erst langsam dann immer schneller" (23). Other characters describe him as "verhetzt" (16f), that is frantic, and the Hauptmann tells him: "Geh' jetzt und renn nicht

so; langsam hübsch langsam die Straße hinunter" (17). The irony of this quote is that the Hauptmann, as a representative of the military, tells him to move more slowly even though it seems as if Woyzeck has to run in order to fulfill all his duties for the the doctor and the military. Later on the Hauptmann compares him to a running shaving razor when he says says "[h]a Woyzeck, was hetzt er sich so an mir vorbei […] er läuft ja wie ein offnes Rasiermesser durch die Welt" (22).

The latter quote does not only give an account of his erratic speed, but also of his bodily condition. He seems to be so emaciated that his bones stick out and make him look like a sharp dangerous razor blade. Moreover, the fact that others perceive him as a running razor blade suggests that he has become nothing but a tool, more specifically, the same tool that he uses to shave his superior. Quite interestingly, David G. Richards also equates Woyzeck with a tool when he kills Marie (84). As a matter of fact her murder has a very mechanical notion, too. He executes the orders that he receives from the voices in his head. The request "[i]mmer zu! Immer zu […] stich, stich die Zickwölfin tot? stich, stich die Zickwölfin tot. […] immer, immer zu, stich tot, tot" (cf. 28) demands him to execute very mechanical actions. The repetitions suggest repetitious stabbing motions which remind one of the repetitious movements of machines. Woyzeck turns this request into practice when he kills Marie and stabs her multiple times (33f).

The image of humans as tools speaks for the motif of human objectification that pervades the play. Through means of rationalization human existence is enframed and reduced to the state of an instrument or a tool. The effort to restrict human existence in this manner can become very harmful for the individual and society as a whole. Against the backdrop of the example shown above humans can become susceptible to

manipulation when they are trained to be nothing but objects. It deprives them of their free will and human morality. Consequently, they are willing to execute orders without questioning what they entail or from whom they are coming.

Because of the great number of scenes in which Woyzeck is shown running, he appears as a restless character, who is lost in time and space. He seems to suffer from the acceleration of time and the constriction of as well as his displacement in space. Moreover, Woyzeck never really seems to reach his destination. Instead, he is trapped in a desolate cycle of life. His frantic movement through space can also be understood as the failing attempt to escape social control and supervision. Work seems to be everywhere. If he is not with the military, he cuts the hair of the Hauptmann or meets with the doctor. Since he is the doctor's test subject whose nutrition and urination is controlled by the doctor, his body is at work all the time and there seems to be no way to break free. The omnipresence of work reveals itself very clearly in Woyzeck's words "[i]ch muss los, alles Arbeit unter der Sonn, sogar Schweiß im Schlaf. Wir arme Leut!" (15). The sun loses its connotation as a source of light and life. Moreover, it is not the positive icon of the Enlightenment anymore which symbolizes the dissemination of knowledge in the world that helps people to emancipate themselves. If the sun is still read as a symbol of the Enlightenment, it shows that Woyzeck feels enslaved "under the sun". Instead of emancipation, the Enlightenment has brought about oppression and exploitation. Everything Woyzeck associates with the sun is work and agony. He perceives the dominance of work over his earthly life so strongly that it makes him wonder whether people like him are also expected to work once they are dead: "Ich glaub', wenn wir in Himmel kämen, so müßten wir donnern helfen" (16). Again, the modal verb "müssen" is

used which elucidates that Woyzeck's life is not a life of free choice and agency but a life of coercion and passivity.

At one other particular point Woyzeck gives a very telling account of how his movement through time and space is affected and dominated by his work duties. After delivering his pay to his wife Marie she asks him to stay with the family but he refuses when he says "Kann nit. Muss zum Verlies." (11). His duties at work seem to separate him from his family. As a consequence, Woyzeck's absence from home results in alienation between him and his family. His son Christian does not recognize him anymore and his wife begins an affair with the Tambourmajor (cf. 11, 27).

Instead of granting Woyzeck privacy and time with his family, work pulls him out of the private realm into the public. In the process Woyzeck loses his subjectivity which is conveyed by the fact that the sentence "Kann nit. Muss zum Verlies" lacks a subject and is therefore incomplete and ungrammatical. Quite similarly, Woyzeck lacks subjectivity and a sense of self. Just like the sentence, his existence as a human being is fragmentary and therefore presented as "false".

3.4 PHYSICAL AND MENTAL DETERIORATION

His physical and mental deterioration that results from his malnutrition and the reorganization of time and space are disclosed in a number of situations. Quotes like "Herr Doctor, ich hab's Zittern" (24), "Herr Doctor es wird mir dunkel" (24) as well as the fact that he suffers from hair loss (25) insomnia and dizziness (28), feels hot and cold (26, 23), is weak (29) and has cardiac arrhythmias due to his erratic pulse (23) show that he is in a miserable physical condition.

Moreover, Woyzeck suffers from hallucinations. He has paranoia (28), hears voices and violins (28) and experiences severe delusions. His paranoia reveals itself in the scene *Freies Feld. Die Stadt in der Ferne.* When Woyzeck says "Es geht etwas [...] Es geht hinter mir, unter mir (stampft auf den Boden) hohl, hörst du? Alles hohl da unten? Die Freimaurer," (9) it becomes clear that he is afraid of some kind of specter which is omnipresent and haunts him wherever he goes. It is the notion of universal control and surveillance of the human body in a rationalized society, which makes him feel watched anytime and anywhere.

In another scene, he tells the Hauptmann that "die Erd ist höllenheiß, mir eiskalt, die Hölle ist kalt, wollen wir wetten. Unmöglich. Mensch! Mensch! unmöglich" (23). In Woyzeck's apocalyptic delusions the order of the world has collapsed. Earth and hell collide and converge. They even swap features as the earth becomes extremely hot and hell becomes a freezing cold place. Metaphorically speaking, life is presented as hell on earth. Woyzeck feels cold, which shows that Woyzeck is more affected by the cold of hell than by the heat on earth. Implicitly, this statement reveals Woyzeck's disconnection from the earth. For him it has become a place which is hostile to human life. This is also expressed by the words "Unmöglich. Mensch! Mensch! Unmöglich" which suggest that humanity finds itself in an inescapable state of denial. For people like Woyzeck there is no chance to retain one's state of humanness. On a visual level the chiasmic pattern of this line posits that human existence is surrounded by the impossible. The word "[u]nmöglich" precedes and succeeds the words "Mensch! Mensch!" The negation of possibility engulfs human existence. Human beings are shown in a predicament, out of

which there is no escape. Instead of being free to be, they are trapped in a state of not being.

After all, Woyzeck's delusional trains of thoughts are more than just the imbecilities of a lunatic. Instead, in a very serious way, Woyzeck laments the condition of humanity in society. At first glance his statements appear to be chaotic and illogical. Yet, it makes more sense to understand his unreasonable ideas as a subversive revolt against the rational organization of society through. Interestingly enough, his seemingly confused statements have more substance and meaning than the allegedly "logical" platitudes of the authorities. For example, the Hauptmann does use a logical sentence structure when he says things like "Moral das ist wenn man moralisch ist" (16). These words, however, are empty. The content of the sentence is deprived of any meaning. Thus, Woyzeck's way of speaking can be understood as an escape into the illogical to retrieve a meaning that has got lost. He resists a rational, and therefore corrupted way of describing the world. By doing that he uncovers the hypocritical use of language in society. Words have lost their original meaning and are just used as hollow ideas to reiterate existing power relations.

In the end, however, Woyzeck's hallucinations become so serious that they make him murder his wife and leave his son. Ironically, Woyzeck does not use violence against the authorities who destroyed him and his family but against the people who are close to him. It is striking to note that there is no mentioning of either the Hauptmann or the doctor after the murder. While they treat him like a physical resource and a test subject, they refuse to take responsibility for his actions and the damage it does to other people. This even stresses the notion of reckless and irresponsible exploitation.

Shortly before the murder, the commodification of the human body comes to the fore in the most chilling way. When Woyzeck purchases the knife to kill Marie, the Jewish salesperson says "Ihr sollt euren Tod wohlfeil haben, aber doch nit umsonst. Was is es? Er soll einen ökonnomischen Tod haben" (30). Eventually, he charges Woyzeck two "Groschen". This scene is problematic on various levels. First of all, the salesman sells Woyzeck the knife even though he assumes that he will use it to commit suicide. There seems to be no moral restraint that keeps him from selling a weapon to a suicidal person and trying to make a good deal. Secondly, human life is made into a commodity when it is labelled with a price tag. Thirdly, it seems as if the price for killing oneself or somebody else is lower than subsistence. While it requires a tremendous effort to maintain one's own subsistence, purchasing the means for committing suicide seems to be less complicated and way cheaper. The play purports that the immeasurable metaphysical value of human life has been replaced with a low calculable material value. Thus, human existence is rationalized and materialized.

As a matter of fact, Woyzeck also explicitly utters suicidal phantasies in the course of the play: "Sehn sie so ein schönen, festen grauen Himmel, man könnte Lust bekommen, einen Kloben hineinzuschlagen und sich daran zu hängen, nur wegen des Gedankenstrichs zwischen Ja, und nein, ja – und nein, Herr Hauptmann, ja und nein? Ist das nein am ja oder das ja am nein schuld. Ich will darüber nachdenken" (23). He thinks about committing suicide by hanging himself because of the dash between the "ja" and the "nein", which can be interpreted in various ways. One way of reading this passage is to understand the dash as the missing link between or the missing explanation for the binary organization of the world into the positive and the negative, affirmation and

negation, power and powerlessness, freedom and slavery, life and death as well as the human and nonhuman existence on earth. It makes sense to argue that he sees himself on the side of the "nein" and grapples with the question why he has to live a life in negation. He questions that society is separated into two groups, those whose existence is constantly reaffirmed and those whose existence is perpetually denied. Covered in what seems to be a delusional train of thought, Woyzeck actually speaks his mind and criticizes the unjust rational organization of the world.

Woyzeck's physical and mental decay create the notion of a fragmented body. In a way, Woyzeck's lack of coherence accounts for a missing sense of social cohesion in society. There is no integrity that holds the social body together. Instead, different members of society fight against one another. This sense of fragmentation is also stressed by the dash between the "yes" and the "no". The social body seems to be dismembered and lacks integrity. It appears to be pitted against itself. Even though it was most probably not Georg Büchner's intention to publish *Woyzeck* as a fragmented drama, the notion of incoherence and disarray also plays itself out on a metanarrative level. With missing segments of the text and a lack of order, the theater director, the audience as well as the editor and the reader try to piece the text together and put it in a logical sequence. Yet, there is no perfect solution to the problem. Just like Woyzeck's body and the organization of the social body as a whole, the text remains disjointed after all. The significant meaning of Woyzeck's connection to the entire social body prompts one to read this character as a grotesque body as the notion of the grotesque holds out further insights into the construction of the protagonist and his function in the play.

3.5 A GROTESQUE BODY

Reading Woyzeck's body as a body grotesque allows one to obtain an even more profound understanding of the negotiation of the new bodypolitics in the play. If one understands Woyzeck's individual body as representative of a communal body – like it is typically done in the tradition of the grotesque – it becomes clear that *Woyzeck* is not just about the physical experience of a single human being but of a larger social group of people if not the entire state. A number of the most typical features of the grotesque body that manifest themselves throughout the text are the notion of simultaneous living and dying, the converging of human and animal traits as well as sickness and decay. These features of Woyzeck's body need to be read and understood as a literal embodiment of the condition of humanity in general.

Büchner's characterization of Woyzeck suggests that his protagonist is both living and dying on stage. While he is technically alive, his nutrition, sleep deprivation and work make his body deteriorate. Time and again other characters notice his paleness. His wife Marie says "du bist so blass Franz" (22) and the Hauptmann remarks "Kerl er ist ja kreideweiß" (33). His paleness indicates that there seems to be no more blood running through his veins and suggests that he is in an unhealthy condition and deprived of all life. In addition, Woyzeck is represented as weak when he loses the fight against the Tambourmajor and starts bleeding (cf. 29). His body appears to be vulnerable, hurt and in constant danger. Judging from Woyzeck's outward appearance, the Jewish salesman also assumes that Woyzeck intends to commit suicide. Thus, he makes the impression that he yearns for his own death. If one understands Woyzeck as a synecdoche of humanity in general, his body shows that human physicality is in tremendous danger. In particular the

lower class appears to be pushed around and beaten up by the political and scientific authorities in society. Common people are represented not as the winners, but as the victims of the Enlightenment and appear to be prone to self-destruction.

Moreover, the doctor notes that he has an irregular pulse: "der Puls Woyzeck, klein, hart hüpfend, ungleich" (23). This suggests that he might suffer from a fatal heart condition. It shows that his body is in a corrupted condition. Next to his restlessness (cf. 26), dizziness (cf. 28), shaking (cf. 24), hair loss (cf. 25) and his tendency to feel hot and cold (cf. 26), his erratic pulse is just another symptom of physical sickness, which accounts for the bad condition that the military and science have inflicted on him.

However, the notion of an irregular pulse deserves some further inspection as it represents how human (physical) existence is radically modified and corrupted under the influence of technology. Time and again the doctor checks his pulse (cf. 20, 23, 24). In one scene he describes it as "klein, hart hüpfend, ungleich" (23). The adjective "klein" accounts for the fact that his heart has become weak and weary. Simultaneously, "hart hüpfend" suggests that his pulse is jumpy or jerky and therefore irregular. Moreover, the word "ungleich," which is also used in another scene (cf. 24), shows that his pulse is imbalanced. Instead of having a consistent, even heart rhythm and a normal impulse formation, Woyzeck's heartbeat appears to be erratic. His pulse rate does not have a smooth and stable rhythm, but sounds unstable and unnatural. Woyzeck's arrhythmical pulse can be read as a physical reaction to malnutrition, but also as resulting from the exterior attempt of rationalizing and controlling human physicality and existence through science and military power. The change of heart rhythm can be read as a violent and unhealthy intrusion into the body. Hence, the text argues that the rational modification of

the human body is wrong and goes against the nature of humanity. Since the new bodypolitics do not only affect Woyzeck but the entire population, Woyzeck's pulse can be understood as the erratic and unnatural pulse of the entire social body, which suffers from the restrictive perception and oppressive corruption of human life in the modern age.

Interestingly enough, Woyzeck's physical and psychological decay is majorly propelled and exacerbated by what he consumes with his mouth. By eating the doctors' peas and nothing else he interacts with his environment and consumes what society feeds him. Just like with Baumert in *Die Weber*, it becomes clear that this food is not meant for Woyzeck as it harms his body instead of providing him with energy. Yet, due to economic pressure, Woyzeck acquiesces to be force fed. His interaction with his environment makes him sick because it has become a place which is hostile to human life.

In another scene it becomes clear that the rationalization of the world makes people indifferent towards the fact whether human bodies are dead or alive. As a matter of fact, dead bodies can even become beautiful art, like in the scene when the officer, a representative of criminal science, discovers and describes Marie's dead body. The police officer appreciates the murder of a human being as "[e]in guter Mord, ein echter Mord, ein schöner Mord. So schön als man ihn nur verlangen tun kann, wir haben schon lange so keinen gehabt"(37). Even though it is not Woyzeck's body, this scene says a lot about how the new bodypolitics have changed the perception of the human body in a rationalized society. The police officer shows no empathy for Marie as an individual human being. His interpretation of the scene is sober and rational. He just perceives her

as a dead body. Instead of feeling sorry for Marie, he seems to sympathize more with the killer as the "artist". From the perspective of a criminal investigator he is fascinated and delighted by the way how the perpetrator took her life. The perspective of criminal science seems to dominate and corrupt his perspective on the world so much that he stops perceiving humans as individual beings, but understands them as a mere scientific variable in a highly rational context. Most disturbingly, he even seems to perceive killing as an artful craft. The dead body is just the exhibition piece. For the criminal investigator a body is literally just a body in the sense that there is no distinction between a "somebody" and an "anybody," but also in the sense that a living body and a corpse are almost the same. As a matter of fact, the latter even seems to have more aesthetic value than the former.

In addition to the notion of the converging of living and dying, Woyzeck's body is also depicted as half human and half animalistic. In contrast to traditional notions of the grotesque, Woyzeck does not really have these conflicting traits in him, but they are rather imposed on him by other members of society. Thus, he is made into a grotesque body rather than being one in the first place. In various occasions Woyzeck's appearance, behavior and function are described as those of an animal. More than anyone else, the doctor takes part in performing this physical transformation. The doctor calls Woyzeck an "Esel" (25) and considers him equal to a cat while the Jewish salesman despises Woyzeck as a "Hund" (30). The literary scholar Martin Wagner draws attention to the fact that throughout the entire play Woyzeck is characterized as a "Nutztier," a working animal (477).

The scene *Buden. Lichter. Volk*. makes another very interesting contribution to the notion of converging human and animalistic traits. While the authorities deny Woyzeck the right to be perceived and treated like a human being and thereby debase him to the state of an unhuman being, the Ausrufer does it the other way around. He ascribes anthropomorphizes nonhuman beings. He speaks to his audience saying "Sehen Sie die Fortschritte der Civilisation. Alles schreitet fort, ein Pferd, ein Aff', ein Canaillevogel. Der Aff' ist schon ein Soldat, 's ist noch nit viel, unterst Stuf von menschliche Geschlecht" (Büchner 12). The claim that animals move up and that monkeys have already become soldiers – what he calls the lowest form of human existence – simultaneously characterizes Woyzeck as a monkey. If animals are moving up, it implies that human beings have failed to maintain their humanness that distinguishes them from nonhuman beings. As a result, the lines between both forms of existence have become permeable.

This insight, however, does not pertain to Woyzeck alone, but to humanity in general. According to the Ausrufer, this development is the result of the "Fortschritte der Civilisation," (12) that is, the "progress" of civilization, which holds reason in high esteem (cf. 12). However, instead of emancipating human beings, the age of Enlightenment has made humans lose their status of beings who are distinct from "lower" forms of existence. Instead, those humans who are on the lower end of the social strata fall through the cracks and blend with animalistic beings. On a figurative level this is put in a nutshell in the Ausrufer's chiasmic remark "viehische Vernunft […] vernünftige Viehigkeit" (12). He deconstructs and subverts the terminology of the Enlightenment. Consequently, it loses its original meaning and is travestied. Reason does not promote

people's freedom and emancipation, but enslaves and dehumanizes them. Instead of a progression of mankind, there is a regression. After all, the Ausrufer's claims are not only meant to be amazing and entertaining for his audience, but have a sharp and very critical undertone.

In conclusion it becomes obvious that the body represents a site of conflict in *Woyzeck*. It manifests the degrading perception of the individual in the modern age. Ironically, it is the Enlightenment which sets the stage for the people's disenfranchisement, exploitation as well as their physical and mental deterioration. Büchner represents his protagonist a product of the new biopolitics. As agents of the Enlightenment, science and militarism shape and reshape human (physical) existence for their own purposes. While Woyzeck's physical and mental condition is alarming and appalling for the audience, it appears to be perfect for the authorities who seek to gain total control over him. His grotesque and deteriorating body points back at the society which produced it. Büchner's protagonist becomes a literal embodiment of the text's critique. It criticizes the rationalization of society in the nineteenth century. Agents of the Enlightenment, like science and politics, have gained so much power that society is organized according to their logic and in their interests. This reorganization of society has a severe negative impact on the individual and collective human body and human existence in general. In particular science develops its own momentum. Natural sciences, the science of law and criminal science do science for science's sake regardless of the consequences this might have for human existence. The scientification of the human body brings about its destruction. Thus, *Woyzeck* characterizes the Enlightenment as a human project that failed. The serfdom or *Leibeigenschaft* of feudalism is replaced by the

serfdom or *Leibeigenschaft* of the Enlightenment. In both cases humanity remains unfree and exploited. The negation of human physicality is even taken a step further in Franz Kafka's *Die Verwandlung*, which will be discussed in the subsequent chapter.

CHAPTER 4

A METAMORPHOSIS OF MANKIND: THE DENIAL OF HUMAN PHYSICALITY IN *DIE VERWANDLUNG*

Franz Kafka's *Die Verwandlung*, which was published in 1912, provides another interesting subject of analysis for this project. Obviously, the text has already been studied by a great number of scholars approaching the text in various ways. However, I am convinced that my study of the representation of physicality in connection with my reading of *Die Weber* and *Woyzeck* can shed new light on some aspects of the book that might have been previously overlooked. Unlike *Die Weber* and *Woyzeck* this novella does not focus on the lower classes, but on how a member of the middle class experiences the physical impact of the modern age. Gregor Samsa is a travelling salesman. He does not produce any goods, but sells them. Nevertheless, his work and life in general are greatly defined by social, economic, political and cultural forces of the modern age. Just like in *Die Weber* and *Woyzeck* the body represents a site of conflict in this novella. The notion of physical alienation and dehumanization is taken to an extreme and can be related to various forces in society. The notion of the corrupted human body is so powerful that it almost seems to become an image by itself in which all of these sociopolitical forces converge. Gregor's transformed body can be read as a reification of corrupted human existence. It becomes obvious that his everyday life as a travelling salesman impacted him socially and psychologically at first, before his self-alienation revealed itself on a tangible, physical level as well. Some critics even ascribe him agency

in the process when they argue that his "inability to return to his job [represents] the underlying psychological motivation for his transformation" (Gross 89). Gross and others understand his transformation as a rebellion against the conditions under which he has to exist (cf. ibid, cf. also Constantine 12, cf. also Fuchs 37). The following subchapters focus on different dimensions of corrupted physicality: the loss of human form and conduct, physical appropriation through a reorganization of time and space, a language of denial, the loss of communication and the grotesque body.

4.1 THE LOSS OF HUMAN FORM

The first sentence of Kafka's novella is very disturbing for the reader. Waking up from troubled dreams the protagonist realizes that his physical appearance of a human being has changed into that of a bug-like being. Kafka's choice of words is very unusual and therefore worth mentioning. The narrator describes Gregor's new physical appearance as that of an "ungeheures Ungeziefer" (Kafka 5). The reader is left in the dark as to what kind of animate physiognomy Gregor has adopted. The word "Ungeziefer" can be translated into vermin, but the narrator never gets more specific than that. The only time a character identifies him as a bug is close to the end of the narrative when the maid calls him a "Mistkäfer" (45).

Rather than describing what Gregor *is*, it seems to be more important what Gregor *is not*. The crucial aspect about his transformation appears to be the notion of negation. First of all, Gregor is not human anymore. He has lost his human form and is therefore dehumanized. Moreover, the negating prefix "un" in "ungeheuer" shows that what Gregor has become is precisely not "geheuer," that is, familiar or safe, but egregious or uncanny. Also, instead of using the word "Geziefer," Kafka uses the word "Ungeziefer" even

though both words actually mean the same, that is, "a piece of vermin" (Fuchs 37). The fact that Kafka persists on the negating prefix "un," however, has an additional stylistic function. It seems to stress the notion of negation that is suggested by his transformation. Thus, the reader is made to understand Gregor as the unnatural, the uncannily unhuman being that is only graspable by perceiving it as what it is not. If the narrator provided a concrete physical description of Gregor's appearance, it would defeat the purpose. The reader is not supposed to be able to name, understand and conceptualize what Gregor has become. Instead, Kafka chooses to keep his reader unsettled. Gregor's inconceivable metamorphosis right at the beginning of the novella sets the tone for the entire narrative. It seems as if Kafka wants his readers to remain in a state of bewilderment and insecurity while they read the story.

Gregor's transformation has a Janus-faced character. The mix of human and nonhuman characteristics makes it possible for the reader to interpret him as an animal and/or a human being depending on the point of view. As it is typical for chimerical bodies in texts, the perspective shifts continuously. The pendulum of existence keeps swinging from one end to the other and never comes to a standstill (cf. Fuß 473). Thus, Gregor’s new state of being is always a conflicting one and is never fully reconciled. Consequently the reader's relation to Gregor is a very peculiar one. Whenever one tries to identify with Gregor, one becomes partially human, partially nonhuman. Thus, the reader is constantly prompted to question his own existence of being. After his transformation, Gregor still tries to get to work as fast as possible. It is quite astonishing that his sense of commitment to his work is so strong that he is rather shocked by the fact that he is running late for work, than by the fact that he lost his human form and has become some

kind of a bug-like figure. If it didn't keep him from going to work, his physical condition would not even make a difference for him. He would go to work despite the fact that he lost his humanness. This shows that his new physical condition does not really represent a radical change in his life. It suggests that he already agreed to live under inhumane conditions a long time ago. He is used to it. The metamorphosis just brings his process of dehumanization to a new, physical level. Society has trained and conditioned him to be fully compliant with its expectations of the individual. His family and his company expect him to work and provide and do nothing else. Right at the beginning of the narrative, it shows how much this ethic is indoctrinated into him. Even after his physical transformation Gregor still feels responsible for his company and family and wants to fulfill his social duties. He is willing to accept that he has lost his social, mental and physical humanness as long as he remains functional in society.

Gregor has accepted and complied to strongly hierarchically organized relationships at home and in the public. For most of his life Gregor has succumbed to people who are socially positioned above him. This can be illustrated by a recurrent trope that pervades the entire novella. It is the image of Gregor being at the bottom and other people looking down upon him from above. Close to the beginning of the book Gregor says "[e]s ist auch eine sonderbare Art, sich auf das Pult zu setzen und von der Höhe herab mit dem Angestellten zu reden, der überdies wegen der Schwerhörigkeit des Chefs ganz nahe herantreten muss" (Kafka 6). This vertical configuration of human relationships appears to be a traumatizing experience for the protagonist. It represents the oppressive relationship Gregor experiences at his job. The ones with power put themselves on a pedestal and make the lower rank employees submit themselves to their employer.

Moreover, it is striking that Gregor is made to compensate for his boss' bad hearing. While Gregor's altered physical condition is a reason to dismiss him from his work, his boss uses his physical impairment of bad hearing – which might be pretended or real – adversatively, as a means of increasing the vertical angle of power between the two. The fact that Gregor has to come closer to his boss who is sitting on his desk forces Gregor to move his head back, keep it in an upright position and look up to his boss submissively. For Gregor physical disability is inexcusable and puts his job at stake, whereas for his boss it becomes an instrument of power that is used to humiliate socially inferior human beings by putting them in their place. Next to illustrating the suppressive power relations, this scene also shows that people from different classes live in different physical realities, which are connected to and justified by their social classes.

This image is taken up again when Gregor has already adopted the appearance of a bug-like figure and looks up to his mother uttering "Mutter, Mutter" out of shame and embarrassment about losing his job and human physiognomy. At this point he has already given up walking in an upright, human posture. Instead, he has all of his feet on the floor and has to stretch his head to look up to his mother from the perspective of an insect. This image signifies his newly acquired low status in the family as he loses the ability to provide for them. While Gregor still had the appearance of a human being, his family used him inhumanely, but treated him with some dignity and respect, albeit on a superficial level. Yet, when Gregor loses his human form and his earning capacity, his family is gradually appalled and disgusted. It overtly treats him like a subhuman being. Before this event they covered it up, but after Gregor's transformation all members of the family eventually drop the facade and reveal their actual view of Gregor as nothing more, but the provider of the

family. Gregor's new bodily condition can be read as a manifestation of conflicted, exploitative and inhumane family relations that have eventually literally taken form and shape on a perceptual level. Hence, he has become the "Ungeziefer" he has been treated like for years. Stanley Corngold reads Gregor's metamorphosis as a "transformation of man into its metaphor ('This man is a louse')" (108).

Later in the novella the image of vertical submission comes up again. After frightening his mother and sister by an unexpected appearance in the kitchen, there is a confrontation between Gregor and his father, who is characterized as the dominant patriarchal head of the family. The relationship between Gregor and his father is, again, represented by a similar visual composition: "Gregor zog den Kopf zurück und hob ihn gegen den Vater" (Kafka 41). In this situation Gregor is stricken with fear as he notices his father's anger about Gregor's trespassing of the kitchen room. Whereas at his job this vertical, submissive positioning was artificially constructed when the boss sat on the table and made Gregor come closer due to his bad hearing, it has now become Gregor's everyday physical reality. He is literally forced to crawl before others and can't do anything about it anymore. In a way, the vertical opposition between human and vermin represents the reification of an oppressive relationship that was already prevailing while Gregor was employed with his company. Implicitly, it also criticizes Gregor as he could have done something about this injustice when he still had his human form. Now, however, one can read him as being too conditioned to resist this oppression. He has given in to these power relations not only socially and psychologically, but eventually also on a physical level.

The reader feels the urge to wonder whether his or her own existence in society makes him or her rather human or nonhuman. If one feels forced to go to work against

one's will and nature, does it account for a human or a nonhuman existence? When Gregor tries to leave his bed as a bug, middle-class employees might sympathize with him as they know how painful it can be to wake up early in the morning, try to get out of bed, stand up and walk to the door to open it. As a human being, the reader shares the feelings of a bug-like figure that lies on his back in bed and can't roll over to get up. After questioning his or her own existence, the reader might question a society, which makes one feel like a bug lying on the bed when the alarm clock goes off. It might feel as unnatural for a human being to do a job which one does not enjoy and only does for the monetary reward, as it feels unnatural for a bug to get out of bed, walk in an upright position and go to work (cf. 5f).

In a similar way the novella raises the question whether the hierarchical power relations in the modern workplace are still human relations or the relation between powerful employers and powerless subhuman employees. Also, family relations might be prone to the same imbalance of power. This grotesque relation between the reader and the protagonist represents one very important dimension of corrupted human (physical) existence. It pervades the narrative and needs to be taken into consideration.

4.2 PHYSICAL APPROPRIATION

A central aspect of the novella is the appropriation of the human body. Throughout the novella it becomes clear that Gregor's physical condition is related to his public life in general and his job as a travelling salesman in particular. The first hint for that is given, when Kafka has Gregor think aloud:

> Ach Gott […] was für einen anstrengenden Beruf habe ich gewählt! Tag aus, Tag ein auf großer Reise. Die geschäftlichen Aufregungen sind viel größer, als im eigentlichen Geschäft zuhause, und außerdem ist mir noch diese Plage des Reisens auferlegt, die Sorgen um die Zuganschlüsse, das unregelmäßige, schlechte Essen, ein immer wechselnder, nie andauernder, nie herzlich werdender menschlicher Verkehr. Der Teufel soll das alles holen. (6)

His job is defined as tedious, monotone, unnerving and stressful. Moreover, he addresses the toilsomeness of travelling, complaints about an unhealthy diet as well as the impersonal interactions with other people, which leaves a sense of mutual indifference and alienation in modern societies. The literary scholar Bill Dodd is right when he argues: “That the alienation at the centre of [the novella] is discernibly material and social, and intimately connected with the nature and conditions of employment, is indisputable” (135).

Gregor’s quote above can be used as a starting point for a discussion of various particular aspects of the appropriation of the human body. The first aspect that comes to light is a reorganization of time and space. For many scholars the new understanding of time and space represents a primary condition of modernity (cf. Gunning 20). The words "Tag aus, Tag ein auf großer Reise" indicate that Gregor perceives his work as a repetitive travail. He has to work and travel long distances on a daily basis. The organization of his time is solely determined by his work as a salesman and not a matter of his own choice anymore. Likewise, exterior forces impose his behavior in and movement through space. For him the aspect of travelling is agonizing. He speaks of the

"Plage des Reisens," which characterizes the dictated movement through space as a burden.

In this context it is important to note some of the new technological innovations that adopt a key role in promoting Gregor's submission to an exterior organization of time and space. First of all, trains play a significant role in his work life. His job has him use trains to travel through space in order to sell the company's products. Due to the advancing technologization at the beginning of the twentieth century, public trains became a part of more and more people's daily lives and a figure of the logic of capitalism (cf. Mason 72). The profession of the travelling salesman illustrates this development probably better than any other job. Based upon the description of his work, Gregor is in constant motion. The image of the salesman, who seems to be on a never ending journey suggests a sense of restlessness, uprootedness and homelessness. He never stays at a particular place for a long time before he is forced to move somewhere else. Moreover, he hardly ever comes home (cf. 13).

The organization of space entails the organization of time. Just like space, it needs to be understood as socially produced and reproduced (cf. Lefebvre 339f). In *Die Verwandlung* the most notable technological object which dictates the time is Gregor's alarm clock. It determines his daily structure. As a technological item that became popular in the late nineteenth century, the alarm clock represents a meaningful tool for the rationalization and reorganization of time in the long nineteenth century. It can be read as an intrusion of socioeconomic time discipline into people's personal sleep cycles (cf. Pelz 2). Also, it separates humanity from nature as it replaces the function of sunrise and sunset in ordering people's work lives. It denaturalizes human daily routine by

prompting them to wake up long before dawn in order to make work more efficient and the individual more productive. The beginning of his day is marked by his alarm which rings at 4 a.m. to make him get up early enough to catch his train which is scheduled to leave at 5 a.m. Gregor Samsa's daily routine would hardly be possible without the aid of an alarm that has him wake up when most other people are still asleep. For Gregor this forceful reorganization of the day represents a torment. He describes the sound of the alarm clock as a "möbelerschütternde[s] Läuten" (Kafka 7). Moreover, he feels pressured by his boss, knowing that he would be dismissed if he was not working from the early morning until the late afternoon (cf. 6). These views and fears illustrate that Gregor perceives the reorganization of time and its consequences at work as violent intrusions into his private life. The fact that he misses hearing the alarm on the day he wakes up as a nonhuman creature can be interpreted as a physical resistance against the artificially imposed segmentation of time.

In a way, mechanical clocks, alarms and the concept of a standard time separate time from space. Consequently, a new understanding of time brought about new experiences of space (cf. Gunning 20). In this respect, it is important to note the relevance of the time tables, which tell Gregor when he has to be where, that is, which determine Gregor's organization of time and movement in space. Historically, railway systems were dependent on the development of a standardized time in order to organize transportation. The timetable represents a tool of recombining time and space and brings them into a new logic. By creating a "series of units within a logical system" the timetable gives a new order to time and space. It generates an abstraction of time which is considered a significant characteristic in modern capitalism (Gunning 20). Gregor's existence in time

and space is determined by his job and adjusted to train schedules. Even in his free time he studies timetables for his upcoming trips and does not leave his home (cf. Kafka 13). Gregor's life is entirely dominated by the reorganization of time and space. He suffers from it, but has no possibility to break free from this spatiotemporal repression. After the metamorphosis, this repression becomes reified. He is trapped and confined to his room. While he may crawl around in his room, he is not allowed to leave it. Quite similarly his day is structured by his feeding times, that is, those times when his sister provides him with food and cleans up his room. The agony of spatiotemporal imprisonment remains the same, regardless of Gregor's physiognomy. It is just the perspective that changes.

In the course of the narrative the reader learns about a number of supervisory forces, which seek to gain control over Gregor and try to ensure that Gregor remains productive and complies with the predefined behavior expectations. The aspects of surveillance and control come to light in various ways. First of all, it is Gregor who forces himself to adhere to the prescribed spatiotemporal existence. He conditioned himself to be submissive to his superiors' expectations for so long that they have become his own. When Gregor realizes that he has slept in and missed his train, he starts to panic which is portrayed by a long interior monologue. Wondering about which train to take he shows feelings of shock, helplessness, shame and guilt. Although he has never called in sick over the last five years of his employment, doing so would make him feel embarrassed. He is afraid of his boss' reactions now that he is late for work: "und selbst wenn er den Zug noch einholte, ein Donnerwetter des Chefs war nicht zu vermeiden" (7). Gregor is expecting to be scolded by his boss, which underscores the tense and

frightening oppressive power relations he is suffering from. Fear, pressure and oppression have made Gregor fully compliant with the rationalistic reorganization of time and space.

Yet, it is not only himself, but also Gregor's co-workers who surveil him. His employer's business servant, who is waiting at the train station, illustrates this angst-inducing surveillance. Gregor is afraid that he might tell his boss about Gregor's dereliction of his duties. The narrator's description of the business servant is very revealing in this respect: "Er war eine Kreatur des Chefs, ohne Rückgrat und Verstand" (7). This quote personifies the servant as a creation of the boss. He is made to operate according to the employer's design and functions as his spy in the field. His spinelessness points at the servant's lack of selfhood and courage while his lack of reason reveals his immaturity. He has lost his subjectivity and is basically owned and molded according to his employer's desires.

Gregor's body seems to be appropriated and controlled by his boss as well. When he ponders over calling in sick, he realizes that his superior would certainly call the doctor of the insurance who would side with his boss and would call him fit regardless. Gregor remarks that for the doctor there are only healthy or workshy people (cf. 7). At his job one's bodily condition does not matter as long as one is able to remain productive. Prioritizing personal health over productivity is not an option. The fact that Gregor is insured with his employer's health insurance makes him the subject to their doctors' judgement. Like in *Woyzeck,* science restricts and defines human physical existence to a degree that it becomes harmful for the individual. Gregor is deprived of the right to gauge his own physical fitness. Instead, his superiors make judgements over his body. This public power over the individual's body is another sign for its politicization and

appropriation. It exemplifies what Agamben describes as the new biopolitics in the modern age (cf. Agamben 3).

The feeling of surveillance can also be noticed in his family home. As Gregor's room has three doors to the other rooms in the house Kafka's design of the house makes Gregor appear to be under everybody's watch. Consequently, all of his family members call for him when they find out that he is not at work. As the provider of the family he is under permanent surveillance and expected to be functional. The fact that he is not at work raises concern and suspicion among his family relatives (cf. Kafka 8).

The procurator, Gregor's direct superior, even stops by the family's home to check on him and find out why he missed to follow his employer's instructions. Since Gregor is an employee of the company, the procurator feels legitimized to invade his private space. His supervisor feels urged to make sure that business will not be compromised by a "dysfunctional" employee (cf. 10f). Gregor's body seems to belong to his supervisors. There is no distinction between private and public space. Once an individual joins the workforce, his body becomes a human resource which is governed and controlled by the employer.

Once the procurator starts talking to Gregor through the locked door of his room, the reader witnesses how ruthless and indifferent human relations become if business is at stake because of a non-compliant "human resource". The procurator shows absolutely no sympathy for Gregor. Instead, he takes up the notion of the dispensability of physical health when he argues that businessmen often have to suppress a "leichtes Unwohlsein" for the sake of business (13). In accordance with rationalist ideas the mind is expected to be stronger than the body. In his opinion, sickness is not an excuse to miss work.

When Gregor keeps on refusing to open the door, the procurator becomes unsettled and angry with Gregor. He calls his behavior insolent, wants him to carry out his commercial duties, expects an immediate and extensive explanation, threatens to stop supporting him in the company and suggests that he might lose his job if he does not do as he is told (cf. 13). Also, he criticizes his work for the company in front of everyone (cf. 13f). His rant ends with the following words "eine Jahreszeit, um keine Geschäfte zu machen gibt es überhaupt nicht, Herr Samsa, darf es nicht geben" (14). The preservation of business is represented as the ultimate goal for every individual in society. According to the procurator, it is Gregor's duty to sacrifice his body and physical health for the higher universal "good" of continuous productivity. That is why Gregor is made liable to account for his behavior. As a consequence Gregor feels obliged apologize submissively. He begs him not to vilify him in front of his boss (cf. 15). He even lies when he says "ich arbeite gern" and he promises the procurator to be more diligent and willing to work in the future (15). The only way to solve his work-related problem is simply by promising to work harder which he describes as "herausarbeiten" (19).

The reorganization and control of time and space have a significant physical impact on Gregor. To him they feel like a violent intrusion into his life as a human being. His bodily condition reveals that they are unnatural and unhealthy for the individual and collective body. The reorganization of time makes him feel sleep-deprived and frustrated. He says: "[d]ies frühzeitige Aufstehen […] macht einen ganz blödsinnig. Der Mensch muss seinen Schlaf haben"(6). In this context it is also interesting to note that only shortly after this passage, Gregor characterizes a cold as a "Berufskrankheit", a sickness which is typical in his line of business. This passage shows that people have begun to accept that

certain work makes people sick. A physical hazard is downplayed and ailments are tolerated as part of the job. Moreover, the emergence of the word "Berufskrankheit" itself provides evidence for the naturalization of physical impairment at work. The use and acceptability of such a term in society accounts for the fact that the health of the human body has become dispensable in as long as a perpetual economic productivity can be maintained (cf. 9). For his boss, Gregor's own wellbeing seems to be secondary to his productivity for the company. If he becomes dysfunctional, he will be replaced.

In a Heideggerian sense Gregor Samsa becomes an illustration of what the philosopher describes as the standing reserve, which is governed and commanded by modern technology, just like all other mechanical parts that are involved in the recurrent process of unconcealing (*entbergen*) (17f). It is quite telling that Heidegger uses the word "Menschenmaterial" in this context (18f). It stresses the lack of individuality and the pressure of substitutability. Also for Benjamin, Kafka's texts are often about the "modern citizen who knows that he is at the mercy of a vast machinery of officialdom whose functioning is directed by authorities that remain nebulous to the executive organs, let alone to the people they deal with" (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 141). In this regard, it is noteworthy that Gregor's boss is never called by his name. He remains anonymous and is just the "*Chef*".

Another notable aspect from the passage above is that the issue of malnutrition, as a side effect of modern labor, appears to be a relevant issue in *Die Verwandlung*, just like it is in Hauptmann's *Die Weber* and in Büchner's *Woyzeck*. Gregor calls it "das unregelmäßige, schlechte Essen" (Kafka 6). His obligation to travel forces him to eat irregularly and to consume food of low quality. Thus, his profession has a direct impact

on his physical well-being. If it wasn't for his job as a salesman, Gregor would not be on such an unhealthy diet and would have more of a say about what he wants to consume. Yet, in the position he is, Gregor has to eat what he is being fed. This image is reified after he takes on the appearance of a bug and becomes dependent on his sister providing him with food. At that stage he has totally lost his taste for good food and has become used to indulge in rotten food, which is inedible for human beings. In a way, he seems to be conditioned to have low expectations and accept food of low quality. A development, which was already apparent while he still possessed human form, has now come full circle in his new life as a nonhuman insect. Gregor becomes what he has been made to be by his nutrition. Or, to say it with Ludwig Feuerbach's words "Der Mensch ist, was er isst" (251).

It is also interesting that Kafka addresses the problem of alienated human interaction. Society in the modern age enframes and appropriates human existence by desocializing people from one another. The words "nie herzlich werdender menschlicher Verkehr" show that Gregor does not have any social ties to other people outside of his family. At work, his contact to other people is predetermined by economic obligations. Human relations are replaced and suppressed by business relations. That is why all of his encounters with other people at work are insincere, superficial, impersonal and fluctuating. Consequently, Gregor Samsa seems to be disconnected from other people and yearns for more meaningful human interaction and cordiality.

Gregor's social and psychological life seems to be pervaded by labor and his public duty. His own emotional and physical desires are shown as withering since his life is solely dedicated to his work. Gregor's mother describes him as follows: "Der Junge hat

ja nichts im Kopf als das Geschäft. Ich ärgere mich schon fast, dass er abends niemals ausgeht; jetzt war er doch acht Tage in der Stadt, aber jeden Abend war er zu Hause. Da sitzt er bei uns am Tisch und liest still die Zeitung oder studiert Fahrpläne" (Kafka 13). Gregor's entire life seems to be dominated by and devoted to his work. Even in his free time he studies timetables for his upcoming trips and does not leave his home. He is presented as socially isolated and devoid of emotions.

Throughout the entire novella there is no mention of any friends or love relationships. It appears to be necessary to suppress all of these desires to meet the expectations of one's job. Instead of having friends, he endures animosity at work. He complains about the psychological terror he is suffering from. Gregor talks about constant pressure and humiliation. As a travelling businessman, he is prone to become a victim of slander behind his back, of which he is usually not aware until he experiences its consequences "am eigenen Leibe," that is, with his own body (20). The peculiar choice of words is by no means coincidental. Instead, Kafka provides another clue that helps the reader understand the preconditions that led to the protagonist's transformation. Psychological terror and physical decay are linked and interdependently related. Gregor's physical change of appearance is only the manifestation of a mental degeneration from a human being to vermin that has been going on for a while and has eventually reached its pinnacle. Previously he had only been treated like vermin. Now he has finally become what he has been treated like for a long time.

Love and sexual desires seem to be extinct as well. The only remnant of desire for love that is left in him seems to be represented by the poster of a woman which he hangs on his bedroom wall. He cut out the image from a magazine and put it in a golden frame

before he hung it on the wall. The narrator describes it as follows: "Es stellte eine Dame dar, die mit einem Pelzhut und einer Pelzboa versehen, aufrecht dasaß und einen schweren Pelzmuff, in dem ihr ganzer Unterarm verschwunden war, dem Beschauer entgegenhob" (5). The repetition of the word "Pelz," that is "fur" suggests that the photo most probably served as a picture for a fashion advertisement. Interestingly enough, the reader learns hardly anything about her bodily features, but only about the clothes she is wearing. The reader is made to view the picture through Gregor's eyes.

Apparently his sexual desire has been denaturalized. First of all, his beloved image comes from a magazine and features a model which is used to sell a product. Therefore it is noteworthy that the image is not real and only the representation of a woman he does not even know. Thus, it can be viewed as a technological reproduction and therefore a corruption of reality (cf. Benjamin "Das Kunstwerk" 4), which has become a two-dimensional compensation for real relationships with other human beings. It is important to note that photography can be regarded as the first revolutionary means of reproduction and that its emergence had a tremendous impact on people at the time (cf. Benjamin "Das Kunstwerk" 7). While it has become normality in contemporary times, a photograph in a magazine might still have been perceived as something unsettling or disquieting at the beginning of the twentieth century. Secondly, it is not really clear whether Gregor is attracted by the model, the clothes she is wearing or both. As a result from working in the textile industry for so long, his sexual desires for other human beings seem to be strangely undercut by some sort of objectophilia that attracts him towards commodities. Gregor seems to be very fond of the picture and adores it. When his mother and sister intend to clean up his room, Gregor's tries to protect it from being taken down

(cf. Kafka 39f). For him it seems to be the most precious object in his room. Dagmar C.G. Lorenz even interprets the pressing of his body against the picture as a sexual act (cf. 175).

Thus, he uses a commoditiy as a means of sublimation in the Freudian sense. Instead of falling in love with an actual human being, his sexual desires are suppressed and directed at an image of the woman from the magazine. What is put on display is a perverted version of sexual desire. Eventually, one can also read Gregor's transformation as the result of a continuous denial and suppression social, psychological and physical human needs (cf. Constantine 12, cf. also Gross 89). His demise can be read as an ongoing development that started socially and psychologically and reached a physical level before it leads to Gregor's holistic decay and eventual death.

4.3 A LANGUAGE OF DENIAL AND A LANGUAGE CRISIS

In accordance with the previously discussed texts, the use of language features as a key component of dehumanization. By linguistic means the other characters deny Gregor a human existence. His dehumanization can be traced back by looking at the way how his sister Grete talks about her brother in the novella. At the beginning, she is thoughtful and caring and calls him by his name when she says "Gregor? Ist dir nicht wohl? Brauchst du etwas?" (Kafka 8). At this point she respects Gregor as her brother and the provider of the family.

After Gregor loses his human form, she still calls him by his name for a while, for example when she screams "Du Gregor!" (40). Interestingly enough, it is not his change of physiognomy that makes his sister change her perception of him, but his failure to

provide for the family. Once he loses his function for the family and becomes a burden for them, her way of speaking about Gregor changes dramatically:

> "Liebe Eltern […] so geht es nicht weiter. Wenn ihr das vielleicht nicht einsehet, ich sehe es ein. Ich will vor diesem Untier nicht den Namen meines Bruders aussprechen, und sage daher bloß: wir müssen versuchen, es loszuwerden. Wir haben das Menschenmögliche versucht, es zu pflegen und zu dulden, ich glaube, es kann uns niemand den geringsten Vorwurf machen." (56).

First of all, she describes him as an "Untier," that is, as a beast or monster. His uselessness and dependence on the family make him become a literal pest for the family which needs to be removed from the family home. More importantly, however, it is necessary to stress the reoccurrence of the prefix "un," which reaffirms the notion of negation that pervades the narrative. He is not an animal, a "Tier", but an "Untier". This characterizes Gregor as nonhuman and nonanimalistic at the same time. Thus, Gregor appears to be caught in between both forms of existence. This implies that a human loses his right to exist in society once he becomes incapable of working and therefore obsolete for production.

Furthermore, the use of the pronoun "es" objectifies Gregor. Grete is unwilling to call him by his name because for her he has lost the status of a human being. Also, she does not talk to him anymore, but only about him. He loses his humanness and becomes an "es" for his family, an object, which does not deserve any form of respect or sympathy (cf. 56). Consequently, Gregor's sister resolves "[w]eg muss es," which represents her last

comment on her brother before his eventual death (cf. 57). Shortly after Gregor's death, the maid says: "Sehen Sie nur mal an, es ist krepiert; da liegt es, ganz und gar krepiert!" (59). The word "es" reoccurs and the maid uses the verb "krepieren," a very pejorative term for dying. It shows that she does not consider Gregor a human being at all. When talking about his body, she calls it the "Zeug von nebenan" (61) which is just another example of how language illustrates Gregor's dehumanization and objectification in the novella. At the end of the narrative, his family is relieved by his demise and even thrives on it (cf. 61f). Ironically, they seem to have been the parasites after all, who used him as a host until he became useless for them.

The use of language accompanies Gregor's metamorphosis, his decay and eventual death. He is made into a dismissible object on a linguistic level. It is noteworthy that the characters do not solely deny Gregor his human existence due to his physical transformation. Instead, it is specifically his incapability of providing for the family which makes him lose his respectability in society. As long as he works and ensures a stable income, the family respects him as a full human being. Once he becomes a burden for them and they have to start caring for him, they become so frustrated that they deny him the right to exist. If people become dysfunctional in society, they are perceived as inferior and dispensable.

One other particular aspect about Gregor Samsa's transformation is his inability to communicate with other people which results from the loss of his human voice. It illustrates a prominent theme of Modernist literature, namely the crisis of language (cf. Eysteinsson 47). While Gregor seems to be perfectly capable of thinking rationally like a human, he is not able to express his thoughts to other people. They are even terrified

when he tries to articulate himself. In this context it makes sense to reference Agamben's theory on the human language. The Italian philosopher refers to Aristotle when he argues that the transition from voice (*phone*) to language (*logos*) situates the "proper place of the *polis*" (Agamben 7). Learning language becomes an expression of a civilized, socialized and politicized life (bios) while the mere voice as an expression of pain and pleasure merely signifies bare life (*zoe*). In this regard language distinguishes human existence from the bare life of other living beings. In the process of growing up a human being usually strips off his merely vocal bare life existence by learning a language. If the individual fails at learning to communicate, he or she is considered socially inferior to other people in society. Thus, language becomes a social marker that labels people as fit or unfit and just or unjust (cf. Agamben 8).

If viewed from this theoretical angle, Gregor Samsa's loss of the ability to communicate can be considered a sociocultural regression. Hi crisis of language debases him to the status of a "lower" being, which is limited to making sounds (phone) that are incomprehensible for other people. Reasons for his human degeneration are provided by references to his life as a salesperson. Prior to this loss of language the protagonist's bare life seems to have already been fully absorbed by the public political realm of work. His metamorphosis and the incapability to speak the human language appear to be a result of the repressive socioeconomic conditions he has been suffering from for so long. Consequently, the protagonist loses his civilized self and body and is expelled from society. While he might have had a say to speak up against the unjust working relations he was suffering from, it has now become too late for him. He conditioned himself to be silent for so long so that he loses the capacity to speak. Again this physical

transformation is only the last stage of a psychological development that has been going on long before the beginning of the narrative.

4.4 A GROTESQUE BODY

Gregor Samsa's body can also be read as a grotesque body. First and foremost Gregor's body features one of the oldest characteristics of the grotesque body, namely the mixing of human and animalistic traits (Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 16). As it has been said above, the protagonist needs to be read as both, a human and an animal. It is exactly the permeable distinction of both forms of being that is so crucial for the meaning of the play. It unsettles the reader, makes him question his own state of being and wonder which parts of his own existence are actually human and/or animalistic. For the scholar Peter Fuß the act of becoming an animal represents the “Manifestation des (Anders-)Werdens” (473), that is, the process of becoming or the process of becoming something different. The chimerical image of Gregor Samsa shows that not only the protagonist of *Die Verwandlung*, but humanity finds itself in a transitional stage of becoming something different in the modern age (ibid.).

Furthermore, Gregor Samsa's body is subject to an "unfinished metamorphosis" (Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 16). His physical appearance can be read as abnormal, deformed and obscene, which are further features of the grotesque body (cf. Thomson 8f). Also, Gregor is rendered as being in a constant process of transformation. At first he tries to walk like a human being and speak to other people (cf. Kafka 9ff). Later in the narrative he gives up on upright walking, starts crawling the walls and ceilings and develops new tastes for food (cf. Kafka 10, 22, 27f). His growing social, psychological and physical consciousness as an insect simultaneously implies the loss of all humanness.

Moreover, Gregor is living and dying at the same time, which is another typical feature of the grotesque body (cf. Thomson 18; cf. also Hutchinson 188; cf. also Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 26). The rotting apple in his body, which is part of the reason for his demise, is a very important metaphor in this context. The fact that his dominant father throws it into Gregor's body can be interpreted as an illegitimate exterior intrusion into the human body (41). In other words, society plants the seed of destruction in the human body. By denying an individual the freedom to be free in time and space society puts people's health at stake. It causes a decay of the individual, which needs to be read as the degeneration of society as a whole. The denial of man is the denial of mankind.

Obviously, all these grotesque elements are set against "classic images of the finished, completed man" (Bakhtin, *Literatur* 25). Gregor Samsa's body represents an opposition to the typically idealized complete, healthy and unmixed body (cf. Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 20). His corporal deformation and distortion unsettles the audience as it questions the state of the human condition in general. The collapse of trusted structures causes a feeling of insecurity on the physical level of the body, but also on the more abstract and metaphorical level of society itself (cf. Schumacher 115ff).

According to Bakhtin, the most significant component of the grotesque body is probably the idea of its cosmic symbolism, which ties in with the notion of the body politic. The body's cosmic symbolism entails that the body is related to both the earth and the universe and represents the people as a whole (Bakhtin, *Literatur* 19). Hence, if one applies these considerations to *Die Verwandlung*, Gregor Samsa's body can be read as a synecdoche of the human condition in the modern age in general. Accepting and complying to inhumane, exploitative and suppressive sociopolitical and cultural

conditions does not only turn Gregor Samsa into an "ungeheures Ungeziefer". His social, psychological and physical self-alienation, which is illustrated by his transformation, becomes representative of a process of corrosion and decay that appears to permeate the entire middle class in the early twentieth century. Gregor's Samsa's body functions as a site of conflict that encapsulates all these processes on a visual level.

Benjamin argues similarly when he describes Kafka's world as a world theater (*Illuminations* 124). Gregor Samsa's corrupted body stands for more than just the individual experience of a fictional character. His corrupted body mirrors the corrupted state of the world and holds society responsible for the bodies it produces. Since Gregor is punished because he is compliant and refuses to resist while he can, the novella critiques this submissive behavior. Implicitly it speaks for a rebellion against all the conditions that lead to the denial of human physicality and humanity in general.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This project has shown that a critical analysis of the human body as a trope in German literature holds out significant insights into the cultural discourse of physicality in the long nineteenth century. *Die Weber*, *Woyzeck* and *Die Verwandlung* help initiate a discourse on human bodily experience under new social, economic, political and cultural forces such as the Enlightenment, modern science, militarism, materialism, capitalism and new conceptions of labor. All three texts provide evidence for the fact that the physical experience of humanity radically changed and that this transformation of existence became an issue for people at the time. The constructed bodies in these texts represent means of negotiation and criticism as they are utilized to reveal, illustrate and protest against the new status quo. Hauptmann, Büchner and Kafka render the human body as the individual and collective physical manifestation of the human condition in the modern age.

Each of these texts offers a distinct contribution to the discourse on corporeality in the long nineteenth century. *Die Weber* shows how capitalism and capitalist working relations corrupt, dehumanize and destroy the individual and communal body of the laboring weavers. *Woyzeck* discloses how sciences and the military practice a new biopolitics which defines and shapes human existence. Instead of emancipating the individual, these agents of the Enlightenment have developed their own momentum and oppress humanity for their own purposes. The metamorphosis in *Die Verwandlung*

represents human physicality as in a state of corruption due to a wide array of social, economic, political and cultural forces in the private and public realm that suppress human social, emotional and physical needs. While these forces are variable, it is always the individual human being who sees himself confronted with the oppressive expectations of society.

All texts show that the negative impact of social, political, economic and cultural conditions in the long nineteenth century pervades both the working and the middle-class. In collaboration with one another these texts construct an intertextual body that shows how humanity is affected by the drastic changes it is confronted with. This body becomes an intertextual site of conflicts. It is constructed as weak, old, sick, decaying, nonhuman and fragmented due to its denial, disappropriation and dehumanization. Thus, the impact of abstract and intangible phenomena becomes concrete and palpable for the audience. The devastating consequences for the individual and society are put on display and become visible for everybody.

The corrupted, intertextually constructed body points back at society as its producer. Hence, the three texts do not only describe, but also call for action against oppressive power relations. Their constructed individual and collective bodies do not just function as manifestations of corporal oppression, but also prompt the audience to act. Once they are confronted with the degeneracy, sickness, fragmentation and ugliness of the human body in the modern age, the audience is challenged to question and resist against a society that created this body.

This project intends to inaugurate further studies in this field. As my research focus lies on German literature the results of this study are inevitably limited. Thus, it

would be advisable to extend the scope that was utilized for this study and make it a project of comparative literature. It is my firm belief that there are many more literary examples which negotiate the experience of human existence in the long nineteenth century through the human body. Further research in this field would contribute to a broader, intertextual and more accurate image of the body as a complex metaphor in the modern era.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer, Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.

Bakhtin, Michail M. *Literatur und Karneval: Zur Romantheorie und Lachkunst*. Frankfurt/M: Fischer Verlag, 1996.

Bakhtin, Michail M. *Rabelais and His World*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984.

Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations*. Edited by Hannah Arendt, New York: Schocken Books, 2007.

Benjamin, Walter. "Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit: Erste Fassung." *Gesammelte Schriften*, edited by Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991, pp. 433-469.

Blackbourn, David. "Preface to the First Edition." *History of Germany: 1780-1918; the Long Nineteenth Century*. Malden: Blackwell, 2007, pp. xiv-xx.

Blitz, Mark. “Understanding Heidegger on Technology.” The New Atlantis, no. 41, 2014, pp. 63–80.

Constantine, David. "Kafka's Writing and Our Reading." *The Cambridge Companion to Kafka*, edited by Julian Preece, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 9-24.

Corngold, Stanley. "Kafka's Later Stories and Aphorisms." *The Cambridge Companion to Kafka*, edited by Julian Preece, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 95-110.

Dodd, Bill. "The Case for a Political Reading." *The Cambridge Companion to Kafka*, edited by Julian Preece, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 131-149.

Eysteinsson, Astradur. *The Concept of Modernism*. Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1992.

Feuerbach, Ludwig. "Zur Ethik: Der Eudämonismus." *Anthropologischer Materialismus: Ausgewählte Schriften II*, edited by Alfred Schmidt, Wien: Europa Verlag, 1967, pp. 245-259.

Fuchs, Anne. "A Psychoanalytic Reading of the Man Who Disappeared" *The Cambridge Companion to Kafka*, edited by Julian Preece, Cambridge University Press, 2002. 25-41.

Gray, Richard T. "The Dialectic of Enlightenment in Büchner's Woyzeck." *German Quarterly* 61.1 (1988): 78-96.

Gunning, Tom. "Fritz Lang Calling: The Telephone and the Circuits of Modernity." *Allegories of Communication*, edited by John Fullerton and Jan Olsson, Rome: John Libbey Publishing, 2004, pp. 19-27.

Hauptmann, Gerhart. *Die Weber*. Edited by Hans Schwab-Felisch, Frankfurt/M: Ullstein, 2014.

Heidegger, Martin. *Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit: Mit einem Brief über den Humanismus*. Bern: Francke, 1947.

Heidegger, Martin. *Veröffentlichte Schriften 1910 – 1976*. Vol. 7.Edited by Friedrich-Wilhelm Herrmann. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2000.

Hildebrandt, Klaus. *Naturalistische Dramen Gerhart Hauptmanns: Die Weber, Rose Bernd, Die Ratten: Thematik, Entstehung, Gestaltungsprinzipien, Strukturen*. München: Oldenbourg, 1983.

Kafka, Franz. *Die Verwandlung*. Stuttgart: Reclam, 2001.

Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. Oxford: Blackwell, 1991.

Lorenz, Dagmar C. G. "Kafka and Gender." *The Cambridge Companion to Kafka*, edited by Julian Preece, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 169-188.

Mason, Jody. *Writing Unemployment: Worklessness, Mobility, and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century Canadian Literatures.* Toronto; Buffalo; London: University of Toronto Press, 2012.

Mccarthy, John A. “Some Aspects of Imagery in Büchner's Woyzeck.” MLN, vol. 91, no. 3, 1976, pp. 543–551.

Nautz, Jürgen P. *Die Großen Revolutionen Der Welt*. Wiesbaden: marixverlag, 2012.

Pelz, William A. *Against Capitalism: The European Left on the March*. New York: Peter Lang, 2007.

Kroneberg, Lutz. "Die Weber. Schauspiel aus den vierziger Jahren." *Deutsche Dramen. Interpretationen zu Werken von der Aufklärung bis zur Gegenwart. Vol. 2*: *Von Hauptmann bis Botho Strauß*. 2nd ed., edited by Harro Müller-Michaels, Königstein: Athenäum-Taschenbücher, 1985, pp. 3-23.

Pethes, Nicolas. "'Viehdummes Individuum', 'Unsterblichste Experimente': Elements for a Cultural History of Human Experimentation in Georg Büchner's Dramatic Case Study Woyzeck." *Monatshefte für deutschsprachige Literatur und Kultur*, vol. 98, no.1, 2006, pp. 68-82.

De Pisan, Christine and Kate L. Forhan. *The Book of the Body Politic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Rey, William H. "Der offene Schluss der Weber: Zur Aktualität Gerhart Hauptmanns in unserer Zeit." German Quarterly, vol. 55, no. 2, 1967, pp. 141-163.

Richards, David G. *Georg Büchner's Woyzeck: A History of its Criticism*. Columbia: Camden House, 2001.

Rothmann, Kurt. *Kleine Geschichte der deutschen Literatur*. Reclam, 2014.

Schumacher, Manfred. *Das Groteske und seine Gestaltung in der Gothic Novel: Untersuchungen zur Struktur und Funktion einer ästhetischen Kategorie*. Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 1990.

Schwab-Felisch, Hans. "'Die Weber': ein Spiegel des 19. Jahrhunderts." *Die Weber*, edited by Hans Schwab-Felisch. Frankfurt/M: Ullstein, 2014. 73-114.

Schildberg-Schroth, Gerhard. *Gerhart Hauptmann: Die Weber*. Frankfurt am Main: M. Diesterweg, 1983.

Sniderman, Alisa. "Stage Freight: Labour and the Representability of Capitalism in Gerhart Hauptmann's The Weavers." *Modern Drama*, vol. 57 no. 3, 2014, pp. 315-338.

Thomson, Philip J. *The Grotesque*. London: Methuen, 1972.

Ullmann, Bo. *Die sozialkritische Thematik im Werk Georg Büchners und ihre Entfaltung im Woyzek: Mit einigen Bermerkungen zu der Oper Alban Bergs*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1972.

Wagner, Martin. "Büchner und Butler: Das Pferde-Narrativ in den Woyzeck-Entwürfen und die Handlungsfähigkeit des postsouveränen Subjekts." *Monatshefte*, vol. 104, no. 4, 2012, pp. 477-488.